

CWO e-news August 2011 issue 40

Welcome to the edited issue 40 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.

In the edited version, some contact details and full names are not given. Please contact info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk or further information about anything in this e-news

Some CWO members shared a really inspiring retreat at Noddfa.

We reflected on our own relationship with the Church particularly in respect of being members of CWO. Some of the themes were Wounds and Blessings, the calming of the storm gospel reading and the magisterium teaching on Eucharist. We were also presented with a positive model of Church in an ecumenical pilgrimage.

We looked after ourselves with Capacitar, Alexander Technique, singing, nail painting, foot massage and of course the wonderful nurturing community of Noddfa. I hope some of the participants will be writing to share their experiences and insights.

Hearing the magisterium's views on women startlingly opened my eyes. I believe we have to know about these ideas and the thoughts of those who oppose our cause. Below in this issue, I have reproduced almost entirely a long article from a parish magazine. I have not identified the person who sent it to me to protect the writer's anonymity.

Other important news is a contribution from Gareth about the current situation regarding our charity application. There will be updates in the next e-news and at the AGM.

One good thing that has arisen from the appeal is that we have had enquiries about joining us for people who saw the appeal on the Charities website.

Sin is to avoid this path of intimacy and communion by any guise whatsoever, even celibacy or abstinence. Evil is to deny anyone, including ourselves, the possibility of this path by making their or our sexuality inferior, in any sense enslaved or controlled, or mere entertainment. If humans cannot enjoy the delighting and delightful face of at least one other, how will they ever seek or surrender to the seductive and loving face of God? They will not even know how. Sexuality and spirituality really are two sides of the same coin: one is body and the other is Spirit.

Richard Rohr

Update on CWO constitution and charitable status

You will recall that at the 2010 CWO AGM, members adopted (for the first time) a formal Constitution for CWO.

The new Constitution sets out an overall charitable purpose for CWO, and six core activities which are carried out to fulfil that purpose.

The overall purpose was essentially that same as that of the Lisieux Trust for Women's Ministry (regd charity no 1070747) which has worked alongside CWO since 1998. Over the years the Lisieux Trust has provided a good deal of support for CWO, and in the discussions in 2010 when the Constitution was being drafted, NatCog agreed that all CWO's activities fell within the same charitable aim as that of the Trust.

As well as setting out the aims and core activities, the Constitution also provides rules for membership, for election of NatCog (the trustees of CWO) and many other issues needed for CWO to work effectively (the draft constitution was circulated to members before the 2010 AGM but please e-mail info@catholic-womens-ordination-org.uk if you would like a copy of the final version as adopted).

Following the 2009 AGM, CWO Leeds was asked to take the lead on drafting the Constitution for members' approval. I helped at the drafting stage, and since October 2010 when the Constitution was adopted, I have been working closely with NatCog (who are the trustees of CWO) to get the charitable status of CWO clarified.

We submitted a formal application for CWO to be registered as a charity in January this year, but after a range of correspondence, the application was turned down by the Charity Commission (CC) in May.

However, under the Charities Act 2006, many CC decisions can now be challenged through an independent Charity Tribunal which looks at the issues afresh in terms of the requirements of charity law. NatCog appointed a sub-group to consider whether CWO should appeal against the decision. After much reflection it was decided to go ahead with an appeal, and we submitted detailed documentation explaining how CWO disagreed with the CC's reasoning to the Charity Tribunal in June. (The CWO Appeal is only the second case to be tabled with the Charity Tribunal concerning a decision on charity registration.)

Since then we have received the CC's Response to the Appeal, and we are in the process of considering the next steps: there will be an update at the AGM on 1 Oct 2011 in Newport. At the time of writing, no decision has been taken by the Charity Tribunal, so the present position remains that CWO is established with charitable aims, but has not yet met the hurdle of charity registration.

Update on CWO constitution and charitable status (continued)

However, in the meantime, NatCog and the trustees of the Lisieux Trust have agreed that it is no longer appropriate for the Lisieux Trust to accept donations specifically designated for CWO, so if you are currently supporting CWO by means of a contribution to the Trust you will have received a message from Pat Brown asking you to take out a subscription to CWO directly.

In addition to my own involvement as a specialist consultant working with charities, CWO has received some significant advice on the latest stages from top charity barrister, Francesca Quint. At the present time, NatCog (as trustees of CWO) and the trustees of the Lisieux Trust are currently exploring a number of options, which may have implications for both organisations. It is possible that NatCog may be proposing some changes to the CWO Constitution at the 2011 AGM: if so, details will be circulated to members well before the meeting.

Gareth Morgan

The Kubernesis Partnership LLP – Charity Consultants (York)

August 2011

From a member's parish magazine

The Church of England is currently carrying out a consultation on the issue of women bishops.

Arguing has come to seem to me to be both futile and destructive. I do intend to vote against the proposal to ordain or consecrate women as bishops – unless something happens to make me change my mind. I have been led to believe, however, that at least some of you would appreciate a bit of an explanation as to what is going on.

The Bible teaches that men and women equally are made in the image of God (Genesis 127). It also teaches that we are equally redeemed in Christ (Galatians 328). There are examples of capable women taking leadership roles in the Old Testament (e.g. Judges 4) and the New Testament (e.g. Acts 1826). There are also examples of powerful women in church history such as St Hilda of Whitby. Some Christians regard it then as a matter of fairness that whatever opportunities are open to men ought also to be open to women. Women ministers ought to have the same possibilities for promotion as male ministers and there should be no stained glass ceiling. Some of us are uncomfortable about referring to becoming a bishop as promotion. Christian ministry is not a career; it is a vocation.

From a member's parish magazine (continued)

However, if there are no essential differences between men and women in God's sight, it seems unreasonable that we mere human beings should behave as if there were and deny women the opportunity to minister in roles to which God is perhaps calling them. On the other hand, despite the fact that the Bible teaches that men and women are equal in creation and redemption, by and large, it continues to make a distinction between them in regard to their respective roles.

Jesus gave women much more respect than many of His contemporaries. They were among the most faithful of His disciples and the first witnesses of His Resurrection, but He did not choose any woman to be an apostle. Despite the fact that St Paul taught there is neither male nor female: because ye are all one in Christ Jesus and that he valued the work of a number of prominent women in the early Church, he insisted more than once that women ought not to carry out the functions of a Christian leader and put this all into a theological context when he compared Christian marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:21-33. On this view, we ought not to have women priests, let alone women bishops. The Church has mainly interpreted the Bible this way and has not usually had women ministers for most of the 2,000 years of its existence and most of the world's Christians today belong to branches of the Church which still do not have women ministers. Is the Church, in making a distinction between what men and women are called to do, faithful to Scripture and guided by God, or is she misinterpreting the Bible and turning a misogynistic deaf ear to the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

Some Christians would say that it does not matter what the Bible says on the issue of women's ministry or what the Church has (mainly) always taught. They would say that the place of women in society today is so very different from what it was in biblical times, or in the Middle Ages or even half a century ago, that what the Bible teaches and what the Church believed in the past is no longer relevant and women ought to be allowed to become priests and bishops just as they can now become doctors or cabinet ministers. This seems dangerous to me. It makes me think of that advertisement for insurance where the man is sawing off the branch he is sitting on. If the teaching of the Bible and the Church is outmoded and irrelevant on things like gender roles and family life, might it not be out of date on other issues like money, ethics, prayer, forgiveness, eternal life, etc.? If I can't trust St Paul when he tells me that women shouldn't lead churches, why should I trust him when he tells me that I shall one day see again my loved ones who have died in the Lord? I can't understand the logic of people who tell me that they can see nothing wrong with having women priests and bishops, but that homosexual practices are an abomination because the Bible says so. If we prefer 21st Century western values to biblical values on women, why not on sexual ethics, or indeed any aspect of ethics? This is why I say that in practice only two out of the Ten Commandments are still respected*.

From a member's parish magazine (continued)

You may well think that the Bible and 2,000 years of Christian teaching are out of date, but, if that is the case, why do we need a Church at all and why would we want priests or bishops? I do think that if you believe that women should be ordained as priests and bishops you must come to that conclusion in the light of biblical teaching, not in opposition to it. If you discount the Bible, what are these women preachers going to preach about?

Leaving aside the Bible and traditional Christian teaching, are men and women in fact the same and ought they to be entrusted with the same roles in society? Traditional feminism was apt to assert that men and women are the same (apart from the plumbing) and that boys and girls would grow up with the same approach to life if they were only treated in the same way from babyhood, and that therefore men and women ought to have equal opportunities as a matter of fairness to them. I think it is now, however, coming to be recognised, by feminists as well as traditionalists, that men and women are different and that boys and girls would act differently even if they were treated in exactly the same way from earliest infancy. This seems reasonable to me because, after all, most, if not all, human cultures all over the world and throughout history assign different roles to men and women. Harriet Harman suggested that Lehman Brothers (the American firm whose recklessness precipitated the present worldwide financial crisis) might have behaved differently if it had been Lehman Sisters. If it is conceded that men and women are different it could be that women are more suitable for some jobs (e.g. nurse, infant teacher) and men for others (e.g. footballer, policeman). If that is so, it could be that women are not meant to be priests or bishops and that it actually unfair to them and to their congregations to ordain them.

On the other hand, some people argue that men and women are indeed different but complement one another. So, such people would argue, we need both men and women in, say, parliament, the judiciary and the police force – and in the ministry of the Church. We need, they would argue, men and women to represent the whole human experience across the genders. I'm a bit nervous about talking about Christian clergy as representatives of God to the world or as representatives of God's people to God. That was the role of Old Testament priests. Jesus fulfils the role of representative (our only mediator and advocate {BCP}) in the New Testament. Christian ministers are leaders, not representatives. God is not male or female. He is without body, parts or passions (First Article of Religion) and Jesus is a man, but He represents all human beings – all men and all women – to God. On the other hand, I can see that pastoral and evangelistic ministry requires both typically female and typically male attributes and you could argue that we therefore need both male and female clergy, but then I would argue back that all baptised people – male and female – are pastors and evangelists. All baptised people are led in Christian ministry by the clergy (who on St Paul's teaching ought to be male) but the clergy do not carry out Christian ministry in place of or on behalf of everybody else.

From a member's parish magazine (continued)

One last issue is Christian unity. Would having women bishops help or hinder the quest for reunion with other parts of God's Church? The answer is that it would make it harder to reunite with the Roman Catholics or the Orthodox if we ordain women bishops, whereas it will make it very difficult to reunite with the Methodists and the URC if we don't. The RCs and the Orthodox are very much more numerous, but reunion with the Methodists and the URC is much less unlikely. So the ecumenical argument cuts both ways.

Finally what many people in the Church of England are seeking is a solution which allows women to be consecrated bishop – which seems to be what the majority wants – while respecting the consciences of those who, like me, believe this to be unscriptural and illegitimate in terms of the tradition of the Church and therefore wrong. This too is fraught with difficulty. If parishes or individuals are given an opt out from the ministry of a woman bishop, she is not truly bishop of the whole diocese. So many senior women in the Church are very reluctant to legislate for the sort of opt out we were granted over women priests. On the other hand, it hardly seems right to exclude from the Church those whose consciences tell them to continue to believe what the Church always has believed up until now.

I hope these notes are helpful! Whatever our thoughts about this, we all need to pray.

* You can't say there is only one God Whom we should worship if you accept 21st century western views on multiculturalism. Neither can you object to graven images for the same reason. Nobody sees anything wrong in using the Lord's Name as a swear word or in a trivial and possibly false oath. Keeping the Sabbath is a joke with very few people coming to church and most people treating Sunday as a day to work, shop and so forth just like any other day. If we really honoured our parents, there would be no crisis in the care of the elderly. Adultery is scarcely taken seriously. You get into more trouble for breaking an injunction by gossiping about a celebrity's infidelities than the celebrity gets into for perpetrating them. Everybody lies to get out of trouble from the highest levels of government to the lowest criminal on the street. Our whole economy depends on people spending money on what they don't need just because they covet material possessions. And that only leaves murder and theft!

The member who sent this piece adds, " Many of us are appalled but this is only one of the problems that our Anglican sisters and brothers face.

I understand from Anglican friends that, unfortunately, the Parochial Church Council was intimidated into passing a resolution in the mid nineties that they would never accept the ministry of a woman. Pity because we believe that a woman Minister could be just what this place needs."

From Women's Ordination Conference Website

Maryknoll Priest Faces Removal from the Priesthood; Receives Second Canonical Warning for His Support of Women's Equality in the Catholic Church

<http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/365/42/>

157 Catholic Priests Rise Up To Support Fellow Embattled Priest

<http://www.womensordination.org/content/view/361/42/>



(Item removed in edited version)

From a CWO member, a retired Anglican priest still busy in support ministry.

You have my prayers and encouragement. Very sad to report that I have had to cover for the absence of an Anglican priest who abruptly left his parishes and joined the "ordinariate". The people were taken by complete surprise; Church wardens were not told until the last minute. Of course no sharing of the issues at pew level at all. People were quite hurt by the high handed action, sprung on them.

I am now told this was the demanded policy of those assisting these few Anglicans into the Roman church. Another sad wound in the body of Christ which makes me wince...

However, let us look to the light and not the darkness. It is good to see opinion in the C of E moving steadily towards the Church of England Bishops, to say nothing of your labours within CWO. May the Holy Spirit continue to fill your sails as you voyage faithfully to the future.

Every Blessing

Volunteer Needed: Database Assistant

www.womenpriests.org are looking for a Volunteer Database Assistant to join our small, friendly team and help at our Rickmansworth office one or two days a week. We are looking for someone with good IT skills and the ability to record information accurately. Previous experience using databases is not necessary as training will be given. You will need to have sympathy for the cause of women's ordination in the Catholic Church and appreciate the sensitive and confidential nature of the data. For further information please email Colette Joyce at colette@womenpriests.org

CWO Annual Gathering

1 October 2011 at The Salvation Army

Hill St Newport Gwent NP20 1LZ

10.30am –5.00pm

10.30am - 11.00am Registration/refreshments

11.00am – 1.00pm AGM (for members only)

The afternoon is open to all

1.00pm – 2.00pm **Lunch**

2.00pm – 4.45pm **Afternoon session**

The Spirit of Vatican 2. How far has it been realised?

"The fresh air of Vatican Two was already more like a nasty draught for some people"

"The Anglican Church, by ordaining women, is performing a valid act of witness.

Owen Hardwicke will speak with particular reference to the role and ministry of women. This will be an interactive session followed by questions and discussion.

4.45pm – 5.00pm Closing reflection

Link for map –

<http://www.bing.com/maps/?v=2&cp=51.587735017694435~-2.995692864060382&lvl=15&dir=0&sty=r&ts=1v1603&eo=0&where1=NP20%201LZ%2C%20Newport&form=LMLTCC>

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

www.ccc4vat2.org.uk/ccc

Catholics for a Changing Church

<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 –

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

Lesbian and Gay Christians

www.womenpriests.org.

Sign up for their regular newsletter

www.spirituschristi.org

A truly inclusive Catholic Church

www.womensordination.org

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

British Museum Exhibition - Treasures of Heaven 23 June - 9 October 2011

This may be of interest or provide opportunity for comment. Some 150 objects will be on display from collections around the world including the Vatican.

There will be a Conference: Matter of Faith, at the British Museum, on Friday 7th October and Saturday 8th October. The Museum says that people in Britain have had little opportunity to see sacred art since the destruction of shrines and ending of pilgrimages at the Reformation.

Thanks to Marv L

CWO Merchandise

These items are great way to advertise CWO without costing you very much. I often see people in my rear view mirror admiring the wit of my car sticker! You can leave the pens lying around in places where it might be difficult to leave a CWO leaflet.

The badges attract a lot of attention with the slogan based on the letters of ROME Prayer mail is a collection of prayers sent in by members, some written by them. This CWO initiative is an inspirational collection.

		Quantity	Unit cost	Cost
Very smart biro with CWO logo, website and `phone no	Purple/silver lettering		£0.80	
Car stickers with CWO logo, website and `phone no	Purple on cream		£1.50	
CWO badge	Purple/white lettering <u>R</u> enewed <u>O</u> rdained <u>M</u> inistry for <u>E</u> veryone		£1.00	
Postage and packing				£1.00
Donation to CWO (optional)				
Total - Cheques to CWO				

Delivery address

Contact email or phone number

Send order to CWO, PO Box 183, Leeds, LS8 9EN