

CWO
Challenging Institutional Sexism in the Roman Catholic Church
E-news May 2012 issue 48

Welcome to the edited issue 48 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 June e-news by 15 June. Also contact info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk for further information about anything in this e-news where contact details are not given

2012 is the 50th anniversary of the beginning of Vatican II.

Many Roman Catholics were filled with hope fifty years ago because of the mood of the council and the proposals made. This optimism has dissolved in the 50 years since then. In 2012, CWO is making a special study of the Council. We encourage people to rediscover the spirit of Vatican II with us.

Our first national meeting was in London on Saturday, 12 May. Facilitated by Kathy Walsh, we prayed, reflected, and discussed together what we might do differently.

We resolved

- To transmit the best of the tradition
- To talk to one other person about these ideas
- To start a consciousness raising process in our parish
- To use social media more effectively
- To stand in solidarity with WATCH and those working for women bishops in the Church of England
- To listen to those disturbed by the ordinariate

We prayed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit

We issued a CWO statement in support of Irish and Austrian priests and a prayer for solidarity with silent and silenced priests in UK. This is the statement: -

CWO supports the priests and people of the Irish and Austrian Church in standing against the direction being taken by the Pope and Curia. We join in prayerful solidarity with all in the UK who are disturbed by the way the church is deviating from the path opened to us by Vatican II.

There will be more meetings, local and national, where we take these ideas forward. The next will be on 27 October in Leeds – timetable and venue to be announced

Item deleted – members only

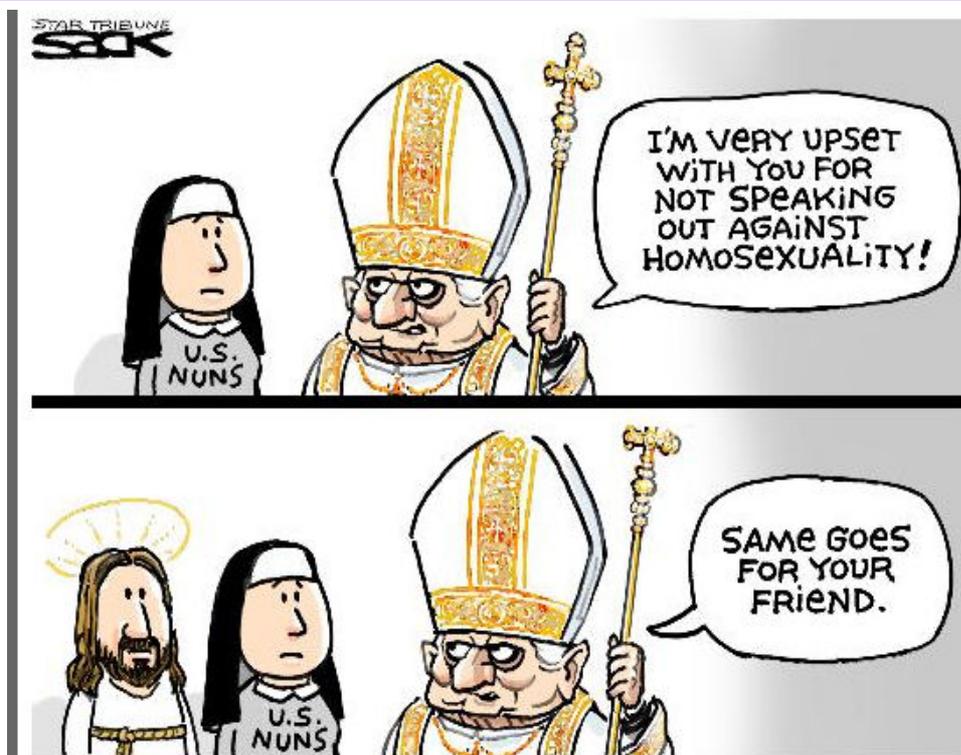
but you're very welcome to join!

membership@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

CWO Saints

Mary MacKillop
Ruth Norton
John Hatfield
Celia Greenwood
Michael O'Gara
Sheila Houlihan
Mary Daly
Estelle White
Pat McGarron
Marcella Althaus-Reid
Astrid Klemz
Jean Palmer
Elizabeth Rendall
Maureen Brown

Pray for us



Thank you, sisters

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALx-eolC1FI&feature=youtube_gdata_player

and thanks to Steve Sack for letting us use his cartoon

Dates for your diary

CWO Annual Gathering

29 September at St Andrew's Waterloo.
More details later

Nun Justice

The project [started a petition](#) in response to the harsh mandate forced upon the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

Please sign up and [Share the petition on your Facebook page!](#)

From Hannah Cleugh (on behalf of the National WATCH Committee)

The House of Bishops meets on Monday and Tuesday (21st/22nd May) to discuss whether and how to amend the draft legislation that will come before General Synod in July. They need our prayers - for guidance, for encouragement, for wisdom, and for generosity.

WATCH hopes to surround the meeting with prayer this Sunday. Below are two of the new prayer resources that will be available from 26th May at Birmingham for use in the run-up to Synod. The first is a general prayer, the second more suitable if you are holding a vigil or something like that.

Please pray for the House of Bishops this Sunday - at home, in your churches, and anywhere else, and encourage others to do so too. You are welcome - indeed encouraged - to reproduce these prayers on your notice-sheets or for distribution on Sunday.

'The WATCH prayer'

Gracious, loving Lord

We look forward with hope and joyful anticipation to the time when men and women can serve you and all people equally in every task within your Church.

Thank you that every position held and task done is valued by you and furthers your mission on earth.

Thank you Lord for hearing our prayer.

Pamela Wilding (Revd Canon)

'Invocation'

Within solidarity of the sisterhood we watch
Within blessings of the brotherhood we wait
Within cherishing of the church we witness
...the watching of the angels
...the waiting of the called
...and the witnessing of the world.

Be over us Watching One
Be beside us Waiting One
Be before us Witnessing One

...may the church, the angels and the world rejoice.

Amen.

Elizabeth Baxter of Holy Rood House.

Links supporting the American Sisters

Jim Wallace in Sojourners
<http://sojo.net/blogs/2012/04/24/having-sisters%E2%80%99-back>

National Catholic Reporter
<http://ncronline.org/blogs/sisters-under-scrutiny/protestant-groups-blogger-stand-behind-lcwr>

Link to letter on Women's Ordination to Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston from Father John Shea OSA

<http://www.bcheights.com/opinions/the-following-letter-is-address-to-cardinal-o-malley-archbishop-of-boston-1.2825569#.T7ZVpoHnv98>

Link to WATCH letter to House of Bishops and other information about the campaign

<http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/005502.html>

Everyday God

*On the end of my banana skin
I spied a cross so clear
Where the banana had joined
the tree
Is that how we are joined to
God?
Peeled from the source of
goodness and light*

Jean Palmer

As I read the latest instalment of the appalling treatment of the women Religious in the US by the CDF, I was reminded of a humorous story I heard recently about the old Penny Catechism. It concerned someone who, for entertainment, used to change around the answers so that they were matched with totally inappropriate questions.

The example given was: Are we bound to contribute to the support of our pastors? The answer: No, for they can neither see nor hear nor help us!

If I remember rightly, this answer actually referred to praying to relics and statues. But now I am aware of a serious side to the anecdote. I look at all the Bishops Conferences round the world, which, if collegiality has any meaning at all, are supposed to be sharing in decisions made in the universal Church. Most of them give the impression of simply sitting back and allowing the Curia and the CDF to perpetrate the most execrable injustices against individuals and groups, including prayerful and loyal women Religious, and indeed against the majority of Church membership.

Where external matters of justice are concerned, they are often very good at speaking out, but within the Church itself they not only appear to be as blind and deaf as statues, but for the most part they also show no sign of trying to give help and support to their own people.

If they were to stand up in solidarity, and tell the CDF that enough is enough, they might be able to lead us in the renewal the Church so badly needs in the spirit of Vatican II. But under present circumstances, while I am happy to support the church I attend locally, I certainly do not feel bound, or even inclined, to contribute to the support of my pastors further up the hierarchical structure. It really does seem to me that they neither see nor hear nor help us.

Ruth W

Some reflections on my visit to Sri Lanka

For almost two months over last winter I was working in the tropical climate of Eastern Sri Lanka in the Tsunami and civil war location of Batticaloa. A friend who headed a human rights NGO organised my stay where I offered some support to an intercultural academy to enhance the speaking of English. The children in that area are almost exclusively exposed to spoken Tamil only, both in their media and film viewing. As so very few had computers, and even fewer the internet, exposure to spoken English (very much needed for higher level studies) was a problem.

I would like to focus on what I observed about the position of women in Tamil society, however, as this ties in more with the theme of enews. Single women appeared almost non-existent in the Tamil community, because the earning power of women was a fraction of that of men, apart from the very few professional women there were. There was general disbelief that I had no family (not that I was proud of that) as there is no real functioning outside the family. This, however, could be problematic for women as I found out because of some incidents that I experienced and some comments I heard.

Next door to our academy, a woman had committed suicide on 29th December and some of my colleagues were too late to help her. They were very distressed by it all and I was even more concerned when I found out that this woman was a catholic and her house was a stone's throw away from a relatively lively Catholic church. It appeared that this woman was married to a very disabled man, and although she had an 8 year-old daughter, she must have felt very trapped by the situation. One of the girls I was teaching observed that if she did not marry, she would be free, but I imagine that is a not a situation she could really envisage. Not that I am proposing that being single is ideal, but the choices for Tamil women seemed very limited.

On the road to Trincomalee where there are still displacement camps as well as people living under trees, the poorest places I could see housed only women. When I had clothes made for me the rate for a day's work was about £1. I tried to pay the women more but they would not accept it. Tuc-tuc drivers (almost exclusively men) could earn 20 times as much as that in a day. As far as I could see, this situation was not helped by the Church.

The exception to that was that on my last day in Sri Lanka, before I headed towards the airport, I met an activist nun, Sister Christine Fernando, who along with a radical priest friend, were supporting 19 different fishing communities along the coast north of Colombo. These communities, which they called social ashrams, were held together by the sweat and toil of women who went out to fish at 3 am and did not get home much before 3pm as they had to sell their fish in Colombo. Meanwhile the men were drunk at home and the children in some danger. The church was the only support these women knew.

Some reflections on my visit to Sri Lanka (continued)

It seemed that the issue of the ordination of women would be a long way down their list of priorities as they struggled to survive. Nevertheless, a radical Jesuit theologian is still hoping for the ordination of women as he thinks this is important in trying to lift the status of women in Sri Lanka. Anglican women are already ordained there, although they have had a very difficult time. I should also add that the Catholics in Sri Lanka come from much poorer backgrounds as they are found along the coast. Anglicans are usually found in the more affluent areas where the tea plantations are.

I hope that through education, women may start to take an equal place in Sri Lankan society, but there are many struggles still to fight. In the Muslim villages, many women were still in the equivalent of burkhas and in the east women had to cover up in the sea (not something I happily took to!). I also had rather too much attention from men, especially as I am now a pensioner. I suppose younger women would find such attention even more pressing too.

I would recommend Sri Lanka as a very interesting place to visit (if you can take the heat and the mosquitoes) but there is still much to be done to help women achieve their full potential.

Sue W

Websites

www.womenwordspirit.org

Women Word Spirit

www.womenpriests.org.

Sign up for their regular newsletter

www.ccc4vat2.org.uk/ccc

Catholics for a Changing Church

www.spirituschristi.org

A truly inclusive Catholic Church

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

Group for rescinding the Act of Synod

www.womensordination.org

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

<http://womenandthechurch.org/>

Campaign group for women's equality in the Church of England

<http://www.stcuthbertshouse.co.uk/expliturgy/>

Rachel is a professed hermit of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham. She sent this link to an experimentally inclusive version of the new liturgy. This is an (unauthorised) work in progress and she would welcome any feedback or ideas to improve it.

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

National Catholic Reporter –

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

Lesbian and Gav Christians

More on the Irish Survey

People were also surveyed about the new translation of the Mass that has been imposed upon the English speaking world. 1 in 2 Catholics who have heard the new wording prefer the previous version; with 33% finding the new Missal more difficult to understand and 43% are unfavourable towards the changes. One of the main stumbling blocks for many people is the emphasis that the new Mass places upon the notion of the "Sacrifice of the Mass."

When I was a youngster, the description I always heard for the Eucharist was "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass". This was boldly printed on the missal that I used and if ever I looked at a Mass card it always said "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is being offered for....." The whole notion that I grew up with was that "Man and Woman" had sinned against God's goodness and because we had fallen short of perfection, no man or woman could make **satisfaction** to God. Only God become Man could make **satisfaction**, that is, make up to God for the sin of men and women. Only by shedding his blood upon the cross could the Son of God make up for people's sin.

Now again it seems that the emphasis upon blood and sacrifice points to a cruel God who demands satisfaction through the death of his Son. God is presented as one who refuses to forgive human sin without full reparation being paid. The impression given is that it must be the Father's will that Jesus should suffer and die and thus make satisfaction for our sins. How much better was the notion that we had of the Sacrifice of love and faithfulness. We believe in a God who so loved the world that he sent his own Son into the World. The obedience of Jesus was to bring a message of love and reveal a God who was "Father".

The mission of Jesus was to bring the light of God's love to the world. He was faithful to this mission and that is what the Father wanted, that Jesus be faithful to his mission. The choice to be faithful was a free choice by Jesus. "The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life" (John 10.17). We can therefore say that the Father did not want Jesus' death in itself, but as a consequence of his faithfulness and because of the opposition of those who should have welcomed him. Jesus died because those in authority were not willing to listen or change and they held on their power and abused it.

We can therefore say that the "sacrifice" of Jesus was one of love and faithfulness. He died upon the cross and made the ultimate sacrifice because he loved the Father and he loved us. The Father did not desire and seek a bloody sacrifice to make reparation to his hurt pride. The Father as revealed by Jesus is the Father who willingly forgives and welcomes home the prodigal son.

Jos D

On 15th May I heard the Dalai Lama being interviewed by Sarah Montague on the Today Programme (Radio 4). He was asked about life and his thoughts towards the Chinese who were enforcing his exile.

As I listened he said a number of things which I find helpful being a member of CWO. I later heard the whole of the interview. He said he didn't feel anger towards the Chinese regime, as that would only harm himself, not them, and was "no help to our problem." He felt anger towards domestic things going wrong. He felt hopeful about the future. He laughed. He mentioned meditation. Afterwards Sarah commented that he had held her hand which was unusual in an interview (but it had not seemed inappropriate.)

It is in many ways invalid to draw comparisons between the Dalai Lama's struggle with the Chinese Government and CWO's campaign with the Roman Curia but I think there are some things which I/we might learn from this holy, spiritual man and his lifelong journey.

I feel angry with the injustice in the RC Church towards women and lay men and the inequality of the poor of the world. I would like to think it is righteous and motivational anger, but sometimes anger leaks out on to our relationships with each other, is depleting and diverts us, and perhaps does not encourage some to join our campaign. Christ is not often recorded in the Gospels as being angry per se...I also recognise that my anger can harm me and is usually "no help to our problem." Other thoughts from the Dalai Lama? It seems to me that it is more powerful to model hope about the future. Prayer seems key, as is a sense of humour and developing effective relationships with others, where it is appropriate. These are likely to win more support and achieve our goals, than unfocused, demoralising anger, hopelessness, no lightness of thought or ineffective relationships with those around us.

As we focus on our Vatican II campaign over the next months, trying to model ourselves on the Dalai Lama could be helpful! What do others think?

CWO member for 18 years so far!

Holy Rood House

10 Sowerby Road Thirsk
Y07 1HX

There are many interesting days and residential courses and retreats. You may wish to book overnight accommodation, or stay for the whole weekend at Holy Rood and take advantage of their provision of complimentary therapies, creative arts and spiritual accompaniment.

Please visit their website or email with enquiries.

enquiries@holyroodhouse.org.uk

www.holyroodhouse.org.uk

The Second Half of Life is for Soul Making

Led by Mary Jo Radcliffe

From Friday 22 June 6pm to Sunday 24 June ending with lunch

Mary Jo Radcliffe believes our latter years should be the most precious of all - our last chance to develop the Divine in us and make our contribution to the Universe.

Maybe the time for being paid for what you do is over and you are moving into the next stage? However eagerly this has been anticipated, there can come a time when you experience a deep sense of loss of meaning and purpose, a longing for we know not quite what and a certain disappointment with what we have made of our lives, despite much satisfaction and enrichment. Once structures have gone we can be faced with the reality of who we are, and ponder what meaningful aspirations we can still have.

During the weekend, we will be exploring these questions through input, sharing, reflection, poetry, film and ritual ways, with the aim of helping us make the radical shift of emphasis from 'doing' to 'being'; from valuing what we do to who we are; from rejecting to accepting the outer diminishment for greater inner depth and enrichment. The healing power of the beauty of ourselves, each other and Ammerdown's environment will add greatly to the experience of the Divine in all things and all things in the Divine.

Mary Jo Radcliffe's life has been a deep search for meaning, firstly in a Convent and secondly through setting up the organisation 'Coping with change'. It works both individually and through workshops to deal with periods of transition and to throw light on the inner depth and desires of each individual as they search for meaning in their own lives and come to discover where their contribution lies.

For further information please contact
The Ammerdown Centre, Radstock, Bath BA3 5SW
01761 433709 centre@ammerdown.org

Prayer from Saturday 12
May meeting's liturgy

*My heart is bubbling over
with joy;
With God it is good to be a
Woman.
From now on let all peoples
proclaim:
it is a wonderful gift to be.
The One in whom power
truly rests
Has lifted us up to praise;
God's goodness shall fall
like a shower on the
trusting of every age.
The disregarded have been
raised up;
The pompous and powerful
shall fall.
God has feasted the empty-
bellied,
And the rich have
discovered their void.
God has made good the
Word
Given at the dawn of time.*

*So we ask you
Tender God, hold us as we
hold each other
Make us carers of all
humanity
Compassionate friends of
all creation
Bless us in our struggle
to find words of meaning
and actions that speak,
May we be abused no more
In our efforts to recreate
the world.*

Phoebe Willetts/Lala
Winkley

Heartening news from Ireland

On a boat going to Dublin almost a month ago I saw the heartening headlines 'Women Priests are Our Future' in very large print. On further investigation (and after buying 'The Irish Daily Mail') ,I read about the survey conducted by the Association of Irish Priests. As well as 84% of those questioned supporting married priest, 77% supported women priests, including 83% of women between 45 and 54 being 'strongly in favour of women becoming priests'.

This is a very hopeful response. Does anyone know of priests in the UK willing to engage themselves in a similar project? I have often felt very disheartened by the lack of passion and leadership amongst the clergy, and more especially the hierarchy in the UK, to examine these issues. If we are looking at Vatican II and do not have proper leadership for collegiality etc. we may have to do something very different. Two CWO members I know well would like to set up a Facebook page to support the Irish priests quite separately from anything we may be doing in CWO.

Some comments from the 'rebel' Irish priests themselves are as follows: Fr. Brendan Hoban of the ACP said the Vatican would find it impossible to quash divergent viewpoints, adding 'We haven't enough monasteries, I think'. This was a reference to the Vatican's demand that ACP founder, Fr. Tony Flannery, 'take time out for spiritual and theological reflection' at a monastery. ACP representative, Fr. Sean McDonagh said he had faced down death threats as a Columban missionary in the Philippines and could handle whatever Rome might throw at him. Fr. McDonagh said he had his own conscience to live up to as he spoke in support of Fr. Flannery who had been censured by the Vatican for his beliefs on women priests, contraception and celibacy.

The ACP has over 800 members. Fr. Hoban said 'We are not dissident priests- there are not 850 dissident priests and we are not all going off to monasteries for six weeks'. Another member of the ACP, Fr. Bobby Gilmore commented on the Vatican's method for weeding out dissident priests and summoning them to Rome. This was after a complaint about Fr. Flannery was made against him by an unknown source –'This is not the way we should be doing our business in the church of Jesus Christ' 'We should take grave exception to the out-of-date practice of accepting reports and acting on them without giving their origin and source'.

In a concluding remark to the Mail, Fr. Hoban said, 'There has to be discussion about the kind of church that we have and the kind of church that we need to have'. Fr. Sean McDonagh echoed this when he said that this survey brings into sharp relief the choices facing the Church. It can be a listening and learning organisation, influenced by the views of its members. Or it can be closed and dogmatic (and not in tune with the Holy Spirit – my words).

Sue W

Call for Papers - Liturgy as muse

Religious institutes as protagonists in renewing liturgy, sacred art and music and church material culture (1903-1962)

International conference of the European Forum on the History of Religious Institutes in the 19th and 20th Centuries (RELINS-Europe) Leuven, Belgium, 8-9 November 2012

The intended focus of the 2012 Relins conference is the role – to which still too little attention has been paid – played by religious and religious institutes in the reform and renewal of religious art and the material culture of church architecture and of worship between 1903 and 1962, along three main themes.

1. Religious Institutes and national/international networks
2. Motives, ideas and significance of the religious protagonists
3. Conflicts and public perception

All these questions and themes will be discussed at the 2012 RELINS-Europe conference. RELINS-Europe (www.relins.eu) is an international forum that aims to foster international, comparative research on religious institutes in (Western) Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. Previous conferences were organized in 2001 (Rome – Historiography of Religious Institutes), 2002 (Vallendar – Legal Position of Religious Institutes), 2004 (Rome – Religious Institutes and the Roman Factor), 2005 (Fribourg – Religious Institutes and Catholic Culture), 2006 (Rome – Missiology, Science and Modernity), 2008 (Leuven – Patrimony, Business and Management of Religious Institutes) and 2009 (Ravenstein – Educating a Catholic Elite).

The conference is scheduled to take place in Leuven (Belgium) on 8 and 9 November 2012 and will be hosted by KADOC-KULeuven (www.kadoc.be). Proposals for papers (max. 500 words, including a title), together with a curriculum vitae and a list of publications, should be addressed to Kristien Suenens (kristien.suenens@kadoc.kuleuven.be) before March 1st 2012. Replies will follow no later than May 1st 2012.

Women Bishops in the Church of England

The Synod is to be held in York this year from from the 6th to 10th July. They would love a CWO presence but are not sure as yet when the debate on women bishops will be. It may well be 9 July. More in next issue of e-news.