

CWO e-news April 2010 issue 26

Welcome to issue 26 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 publication in the next e-news by 10 May 2010. Also for further information about anything in this e-news where contact details are not given - info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

Myra Poole and I met Fabian Hamilton, my MP, on 30 March. He was very supportive and said he would plead our case if the opportunity arose. He readily understood the connection between institutionalised misogyny and the oppression of women in the developing world.

The campaign will develop as follows:-

April to June: prayer and reflection, contacting clergy, bishops, papal nuncio, and cardinal. At NatCog on Saturday 10 April, it was decided to send a letter to all bishops, archbishops and the papal nuncio. A letter has been drafted by Ianthe and will be finalised by the media group.

July to the actual visit: action including a presence at **Greenbelt festival 27 – 30 August**. We need people to volunteer for our stall. Please consider giving up a day for CWO to be on our Greenbelt stall. This year is really important for us because of the Pope's visit as there is much interest in us.

There will be a weekend for prayer and reflection **Friday 6 to Sunday 8 August at Noddfa** <http://www.noddfa.org.uk/> . This is open to all members. The cost is £80. There is wheelchair accessibility.

Places are limited so please send £20 to me to reserve a place by **31 May. No bookings can be accepted after this date.** (My address is on the merchandise form at the end of this e-news.) It is really important for us to spend time in reflection to renew our spiritual energy.

What is infallible?

According to papal historian Michael Walsh there has only been one occasion since the First Vatican council proclamation when a pope has made an infallible statement.

In 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the assumption of Mary into heaven as a dogma of faith. According to Mr Walsh, it is thought Pope John Paul II wanted to speak infallibly in 1994 when he ruled out the possibility of women ever being ordained, but was advised against it.

While he decreed that Catholics should not even talk about the issue further, the subject could, theoretically, be debated in the future.

CWO Annual Gathering

Advance Notice that this year's Annual Gathering will be on 2 October 2010, St Andrew's, Waterloo, London. More details to follow.

The AGM will be held in the morning and an important part will be discussion on the proposed CWO constitution. CWO has never had a formal constitution and NatCog (National Coordinating group) met on 10 April to finalise the draft version.

It will be sent out to everyone in July along with other AGM papers. Please take time to look at it. If you can't attend the Annual Gathering, you will be able to send your comments which can be addressed at the meeting. However, ideally we would like as many members as possible to attend. One of the main points is that, because of a change in rules for charities, CWO can now adopt the charitable status held by Lisieux Trust so we will no longer need two separate organisations. The education side of Lisieux Trust will still continue with an education officer post being introduced to NatCog. The Lisieux Trustees have agreed to this merger in principle.

More details about this later but please look out for the draft constitution and other AGM papers, read them and let us have your comments.

The afternoon session will probably be a reflective time following on from the Papal visit and (we hope) much media attention in our movement.

Meditation suggestion for Eastertide

John Chapter 21: 3-6

I have used this passage in my meditation recently and found it very thought provoking in regard to spirituality for activism.

If any members are drawn to reflect and pray on this passage please send in any thoughts you have to the next e-news that may well help others.

It would be good to hear what inspirations have come to you. I have decided not to share my thoughts till then.

Myra

Catholic Bishops praised

Response to the English Catholic Bishops Conference statement (13 April) on child sex abuse and sexual orientation. London - 15 April 2010

"I commend the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales for their intelligent, calm and accurate rejection of a causal link between paedophilia and sexual orientation. Their measured, non-homophobic tone contrasts sharply with the shrill, scapegoating comments of Cardinal Bertone,"

Peter Tatchell

"Catholic Voices"

In last month's e-news, I wrote about my interview with "Catholic Voices" (the group of "ordinary Catholics" which has been set up to be trained to be interviewed at the time of the Pope's visit <http://www.catholicvoices.org.uk/>)

I received a reply to my request for feedback as to why I wasn't chosen and this was the response: -

"We wondered about your strongly held views on the ordination of women priests. This project is all about communicating better the Church's teaching to people unfamiliar with Catholicism rather than opening up debates within the Church."

I replied that I believed that it would be far better to show a Church which encourages debate and is open to change. I said that I knew that many "ordinary Catholics" would like a more open Church and in fact the Pope had asked his bishops to consult with the people of God on return to the UK. No further response has been forthcoming.

Having seen two of the people who interviewed me, Jack Valero and Clifford Longley, on the Big Questions (unfortunately too late now for "watch again") trying to defend the indefensible, and making a total hash of it, I am so glad I'm not part of this project. They have made their intransigent bed and now they must squirm in it!

Pat

Catholic Voices for Reform

This group is being formed by CWO for the Papal visit. We will be a group that takes the stance that Pat has stated in the above. We will fill in the gaps that Catholic Voices will not touch and be a group not afraid to tackle the difficult questions. CWO is initiating this media group and spokespeople, from other reform groups, have already agreed to be speakers. This will enable us all to talk on a variety of issues, especially the culture of silence and silencing of the loyal opposition to Vatican views. Clearly this will involve a wide range of issues, sexual abuse, homosexuality, women's position in the church, reform of the priesthood etc. and the present way the RC Church makes decisions and is governed. A call to find again the reforming values of Vatican II will be at the centre of our concerns.

We have trained a few of our members but anyone who has any media experience is very welcome, especially if you are willing to contact your local radio stations. Please contact me if you have any burning issues you would like to speak on. A press release is being prepared and will go out at the beginning of May to let the press know we are around.

We have no idea if the media will give us much airtime but we can only try.

Myra (Media coordinator)

Maureen Dowd

Thanks to Dorothea for this link to Maureen's column "Nope For Pope" from the New York Times 27.3.2010. She might be worth checking out in the New York Times on a regular basis!

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/opinion/28dowd.html?scp=1&sq=Nope%20for%20Pope&st=cse>

Eve's talk with God

"Lord, I have a problem."

"What's the problem, Eve?"

"I know that you created me and provided this beautiful garden and all of these wonderful animals, as well as that hilarious comedic snake, but I'm just not happy."

"And why is that Eve?"

"Lord, I am lonely, and I'm sick to death of apples."

"Well, Eve, in that case, I have a solution. I shall create a man for you."

"Man? What is that Lord?"

"A flawed creature, with many bad traits. He'll lie, cheat and be vain; all in all, he'll give you a hard time. But he'll be bigger, faster and will like to hunt and kill things. I'll create him in such a way that he will satisfy your physical needs. He will be witless and will revel in childish things like fighting and kicking a ball about. He won't be as smart as you, so he will also need your advice to think properly."

"Sounds great," says Eve, with ironically raised eyebrows, "but what's the catch Lord?"

"Well ... You can have him on one condition."

" And what's that Lord? "

"As I said, he'll be proud, arrogant and self-admiring ... So you'll have to let him believe that I made him first. And it will have to be our little secret ...you know, woman to woman."

(Thanks to Katharine for finding this – and apologies to all the wonderful men in our organisation)

Stand Up For Vatican 2

www.standup4vatican2.org.uk

A letter has been drafted for anyone to personalise and send to their bishop if they wish: -

Bishops address Your address for reply
Date

Dear

You will of course be well aware that this year sees the 45th Anniversary of the closing of Vatican Council II which has so enriched the life of the Church.

The gradual implementation of the Council Decrees has been a great force for bringing Our Lord's Church into closer active contact with the world in which we live, helping many of us to see new meaning and practical purpose in our membership.

It would be wonderful if there were to be a Diocesan Mass later in the year to celebrate this anniversary; this would encourage us all not to sit on our laurels as though the work were over. If such an event is not already in the planning stages, we ask you to give this suggestion careful consideration, in the full knowledge that you will have the support of very many of the people in your diocese.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

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 equality?

Discussion exploring modern interpretations of social and sexual theology.

Monday June 28th
6.30-8.30pm

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

Lisbon visit – 24th-26th March 2010

I was invited to give a talk to the 'European Network of the Church on the Move' group in Portugal this March. I felt very privileged to have been invited and I was asked to speak on 'God, Women and the Church'. I chose to reflect on my experience, especially my experience of the Institutional aspect of the RC Church - the silencing and ignoring of women's views and experience worldwide.

I said that all our stories are microcosms of a much larger macrocosm and all women's lives reflect some aspects of this psychological, prevalent and institutionalised abuse. I also underlined the deep connection between women's worldwide poverty and the non-ordination of women. I have said this many times in CWO and I have heard others say it as well. If women cannot represent God in public in all sacramental roles and roles of authority in the Church, then it follows that women must be less than human and they can be abused, ignored, raped etc.; in other words treated as non persons. That is why Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza has always said 'Until all women are free, no woman is free'.

This has always been my *raison d'être* for being involved in this movement and is the power behind my long commitment to this cause. As we all know, for women to be treated as total equals, a deep reformation of church government, its patriarchal theology, philosophy, anthropology and spirituality will be required. The present sex abuse crisis may well be the springboard for beginning to wake up many RC's to the dangers of the present culture of silence, cover up and an all-male leadership structure. Those who are part of this culture are not the ones to change it. Never have the reformed and thinking laity, women and men, been more needed. I also did two interviews for the Portuguese press.

It is much more difficult for reform groups in Portugal given that the country has long been embedded in this RC culture. They were a great group to be with and I was treated so well. I not only met many interesting people in the Portuguese reform world but I was well looked after and taken to some of Lisbon's interesting sites, including the Monastery of Jeronimos, where the Treaty of Lisbon was signed, the modern art gallery, where I was introduced to the work of a wonderful woman sculptress, Joana Vasconcelos and a day at the National Palace of Sintra, the Palace of the Kings and Queens of Portugal before the Republic.

It is good to know that our networks are worldwide and we can meet like-minded people in so many places.

Myra

Peter Kennedy- The Man who threatened Rome "Portrait of a rebel Priest"

ISBN 978-0-9805643-6-5

The title and subtitle of this book ensured my interest from the start. When I read the subtitles and noted chapters by Joan Chittister, Paul Collins and Roy Bourgeois, I knew it would be a hard one to put down!

Father Peter Kennedy of St Mary's, South Brisbane, was sacked by the Archbishop of Brisbane in February 2009 for contravening aspects of Catholic doctrine. This in itself reminded me of the story of Spiritus Christi in Rochester in the US.

This is the remarkable journey of a parish community and its priest, and the different decisions members of that community chose to make when they fell foul of the hierarchy. The image of St Mary's is of a Church that celebrates inclusion, and lives the Gospel. Women have a key role in the liturgy; communion is celebrated in a non-hierarchical way. This is the journey of an unapologetic community forced into exile from the official church, yet bravely ministering together and sharing the love of God. A profoundly moving book.

PS Peter Kennedy is hopefully coming to speak in the UK later this year- Watch this space!!!

Katharine Salmon

Plea from Newsletter Editor

I have sufficient material for the Newsletter but editing is either going to take forever or I shall simply have to cut down on some really interesting articles. I promise not to overburden anybody and shall only give one article per person. Actually I may give you several articles but on the same subject so that you can condense it.

Thank you

Diana Edwards info@catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk

Websites

www.womenwordspirit.org

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

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

Group for rescinding the Act of Synod

www.womenandthechurch.org

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

National Catholic Reporter - Joan Chittister 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

Digby Stuart Lecture

This year, the Digby Stuart lecture will be given by David Bintley, Director of the Birmingham Royal Ballet.

These annual lectures are given by well-known Catholics from across the cultural, political and academic spectrum, as a forum for exploring the relationship between the Catholic faith and public life, and for recognising the diverse ways in which Catholics contribute towards British society.

Date and time: 18 May at 6.30 pm (followed by a reception)
Venue: Digby Stuart Chapel, Digby Stuart College, Roehampton University, London SW15 5PH
For further information, please contact Tina Beattie:
t.beattie@roehampton.ac.uk

Some members may want to visit this site to consider signing this petition.
<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/ProtectthePope/>

Just to re-iterate - this is for your information - so we know what's going on out there in the secular world, which is our world too!

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*

Church in worst credibility crisis since Reformation, theologian tells bishops

Check out Hans Kung in the Irish Times
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2010/0416/1224268443283.html>

The Annunciation story (Luke 1:26-38) is the crescendo point of the Biblical theme of grace.

Did you ever notice that Mary does not say she's "not worthy"? She just asks for clarification. She only asks "How" because that might ask something more of her. She never asks if, whether or why!

That is quite extraordinary and reveals her lack of ego. She becomes the archetype of perfect receptivity. It takes the entire Bible to work up to one perfect vessel that knows how to say an unquestioning yes to an utterly free gift. She does it alone, quietly, and with courage, which makes this the real day of the Incarnation.

We could call today, "Hidden Christmas," nine months before the visible birth, but that secret day when all is conceived inside the human heart and soul—and body.

Richard Rohr

I have just returned from an ecumenical Service in York Minster to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. It was a very moving occasion with a friend of Romero's there with his son who is now the Ambassador of El Salvador. It included a mixture of Bishops, and a Cardinal, and three women (not that I was counting!), including Mary Walmsley CJ, and the local diocesan CAFOD representative Carol Cross, and other representatives of different denominations who also took part with readings and prayers. I didn't feel overwhelmed by a male hierarchy on this occasion. There were hundreds in the congregation on a cold wet day.

All the time there were photographs and extracts of Romero's sermons being projected, including a recording of part of his last sermon which was the final straw for the government challenging the baptised members of the government and military to do what was right for the people, and that effectively signed his death warrant as the next day he was shot during Mass. Archbishop John Sentamu spoke for about 20 minutes about what makes a saint and the need to work for social justice, like Romero. He then told us he (Sentamu) had been admitted to hospital during the night and had to go back there after the Service: he couldn't swallow and had completely lost his voice. A 20 minute sermon for anyone to deliver is a challenge...so maybe that was a public miracle which will help to recognise Romero as an "official saint" though, it seems to me he doesn't really need the official stamp of sainthood...

I think Romero is very relevant to CWO's mission for social justice in the Catholic Church albeit that in the UK, at least, we are unlikely to be shot for our beliefs. Not so, elsewhere in the world... Two quotations from Romero's sermons which I particularly appreciated: -

"The Church is not memories. It is not merely a rear view mirror. The Church continues to move forward and needs new perspectives...let us know how to be men and women of the now."

"It is very easy to be servants of the Word without disturbing the world..."

I pray that those of us in CWO are inspired to be women and men of the now, and that we continue to disturb the world.

Pippa Bonner

Catholic Women's Ordination on Facebook.

Some stats: -

Facebook members of Catholic Women's Ordination - 52

73% Female 18% Male (Some not known!)

50% are aged under 44

We have members from the UK, Canada, US, Hungary, Germany, Finland & Russia. Please join if you are on Facebook and lets see if we can get a whole host of hits during Greenbelt.

Please upload photos if you have any.

N.B. Please be sure to have permission to show photos or give names of members

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

Catherine Wareing

Westminster Cathedral Vigil

London CWO continues to pray on the first Wednesday of the month. Their next vigil will be on the Cathedral Piazza on Sunday 25 April 11am to 12.30pm, Vocations Sunday. This will catch those coming out of 10.30 Mass and those going into 12 Mass. They stand with banners, hand out CWO leaflets and attempt to engage people in discussion - response has been increasingly encouraging.

Think Tank

We are hoping to set up a Think Tank of prominent Catholics in various fields to help us publicise the issue of women's ordination within the Roman Catholic Church. We have compiled a list of possible people and drafted a letter to send to these people, which is now being finalised. To cover the youth angle, some CWOLO members will be attending the Youth Mass at Mount Street.

Jillian Dempsey

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

Phone 01865 305305