



Why Women Matter

International Women's Day

8th March 2018 • The Aula of the Jesuit Curia



VOICES
OF FAITH





THIS MAGAZINE WILL SHOWCASE THE STORIES AND DISCUSSIONS FROM THE 2018 **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - WHY WOMEN MATTER**



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We live in times marked by change, but there are places where gender equality is being systematically overlooked. The Catholic Church is one of them and this puts the institution at risk. Young Catholics are leaving, women who have been a mainstay of parish life are departing. This is especially true of young Catholic women who are absent at rates unparalleled in our history and are not returning.

Today, women are asking why the Church is so slow in recognizing their value and opening governance and ministerial roles to them; roles that incorporate their faith, gifts, expertise and education into structures of authority at all levels.

Voices of Faith believe that women's voices in the Vatican must carry as far as their male counterparts, and with the same weight. If current leaders of the Roman Curia do not include capable, qualified women in roles that are theoretically open to them, we face a future where the Catholic Church will be a relic of the past.

Our world is facing a future more meaningful by the inclusion of women in significant positions. We won't allow gender inequality to undermine the longevity of the Church.

Our voices stir the winds of change, so we must speak.

WILL POPE FRANCIS AND OUR PASTORAL LEADERS LISTEN TO OUR VOICE?



WELCOME FIDELIS GÖTZ

President, Fidel Götz Foundation, Liechtenstein



LADIES AND GENTLEMAN
HERE IN ROME, DEAR
FRIENDS WATCHING ON
THE LIVE FEED FROM
AROUND THE WORLD,
AND IN PARTICULAR ALL
THE WOMEN WHOM WE
CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY TODAY,
WELCOME TO THIS EVENT
ON BEHALF OF THE FIDEL
GÖTZ FOUNDATION.

First, I would also like to express our deep gratitude to our friends the Jesuits, whom we have worked with for over 50 years now, for hosting us in this venue...close to the Vatican.

Second, I'd like to express my deep thanks to Chantal and her dedicated team of Voices of Faith who once again have put on a tremendous event together with an illustrious round of women and I think one man, who will give us their thoughts and insights on why women matter within the Church.

Marilyn Monroe once sang 'diamonds are a girl's best friend,' she could also have sang 'girls are God's best friend' and I think nobody would have disagreed. Why is that? Girls are women for that matter; are funny, they are courageous, they are engaging, they are helpful, they are role models, they are natural leaders and above all, they are faithful. Wouldn't these all be qualities and attributes that we would look for in our friends? And wouldn't these also all be qualities that God would look for when putting his team together to lead his Church in this millennium, men and women alike?

So why does the Church struggle to become an all inclusive church, and separate roles for women and for men?

Why are all men created equal in civil society, but not in the Church society?

Why are women and men baptised the same way in this Church, but the Church excludes those same women from the priesthood of Christ. And why is the Church holding onto traditions that have no basis in the Bible, but are based on a self imposed patriarchy.

We believe it's high time for the Church to change. Please listen to the views and thoughts expressed today. Provoke them, challenge them, share them, discuss them. Only then can we continue to trigger a thought and change process within this Church. And only then can we create the visibility necessary for this. The future of our Catholic Church depends on it. Don't let that Church fall asleep - wake her up!

THANK YOU.



CATHOLIC FEMALE LEADERSHIP, WHY THE CONTROVERSY?

— MARY MCALEESE



Part 1

Story
TellingMary
McAleese

President of Ireland 1997-2011

"Historical oppression of women has deprived the human race of untold resources, true progress for women cannot fail to liberate enormous reserves of intelligence and energy, sorely needed in a world that is groaning for peace and justice". (extract from presentation by Professor Maryann Glendon, member of the Holy See Delegation to the UN Conference on Women, Beijing 1995).

The Israelites under Joshua's command circled Jericho's walls for seven days, blew trumpets and shouted to make the walls fall down (cf. Joshua 6:1-20). We don't have trumpets but we have voices, voices of faith and we are here to shout, to bring down our Church's walls of misogyny. We have been circling these walls for 55 years since John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* first pointed to the advancement of women as one of the most important "signs of the times".

"They are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons". The longstanding inferiority complex of

certain classes because of their economic and social status, sex, or position in the State, and the corresponding superiority complex of other classes, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. At the Second Vatican Council Archbishop Paul Hallinan of Atlanta, warned the bishops to stop perpetuating "the secondary place accorded to women in the Church of the 20th century" and to avoid the Church being a "late-comer in [their] social, political and economic development". The Council's decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* said it was important that women "participate more widely [...] in the various sectors of the Church's apostolate". The Council's pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* said the elimination of discrimination based on gender was a priority. Paul VI even commissioned a study on women in Church and Society. Surely we thought then, the post-conciliar Church was on the way to full equality for its 600 million female members. And yes-it is true that since the Council, new roles and jobs, have opened up to the laity including women but these have simply marginally increased the visibility of women in subordinate roles, including in the Curia, but they have added nothing to their decision-making power or their voice.

Remarkably since the Council, roles which were specifically designated as suitable for the laity have been deliberately closed to women. The stable roles of acolyte and lector and the permanent diaconate have been opened only to lay men. Why? Both laymen and women can be temporary altar servers

but bishops are allowed to ban females and where they permit them in their dioceses individual pastors can ban them in their parishes.

Why?

Back in 1976 we were told that the Church does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination. This has locked women out of any significant role in the Church's leadership and authority structure. Yet in justice their very permanent exclusion from priesthood should have provoked the Church to find innovative ways of including women's voices as of right in the divinely instituted College of Bishops and the man made entities such as the College of Cardinals, the Synod of Bishops and episcopal conferences. Just imagine the normative scenario; Pope Francis calls a Synod on Women and 350 male celibates advise the Pope on what women really want? That is how ludicrous our Church has become. How long can the hierarchy sustain the credibility of a God who wants things this way, who wants a Church where women are invisible and voiceless in leadership and decision-making?

It was here in this very hall in 1995 that Irish Jesuit theologian, Fr. Gerry O'Hanlon put his finger on the underpinning systemic problem when he steered Decree 14 through the Jesuits 34th General Congregation. It is a forgotten document but today we will dust it down and use it to challenge a Jesuit Pope, a reforming Pope, to real, practical action on behalf of women in the Catholic Church. Decree 14 says:

We have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women. And, like many men, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem. However unwittingly, we have often contributed to a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine sanction. By making this declaration we wish to react personally and collectively, and do what we can to change this regrettable situation.

"The regrettable situation" arises because the Catholic Church has long since been a primary global carrier of the virus of misogyny. It has never sought a cure though a cure is freely available. Its name is "equality".

Down the 2000 year highway of Christian history came the ethereal divine beauty of the Nativity, the cruel sacrifice of the Crucifixion, the Hallelujah of the Resurrection and the rallying cry of the great commandment to love one another. But down that same highway came man-made toxins such as misogyny and homophobia to say nothing of anti-semitism with their legacy of damaged and wasted lives and deeply embedded institutional dysfunction.

The laws and cultures of many nations and faith systems were also historically deeply patriarchal and excluding of women, some still are but today the Catholic Church lags noticeably behind the world's advanced nations in



the elimination of discrimination against women. Worse still, because it is the “pulpit of the world” to quote Ban Ki-Moon its overt patriarchalism acts as a powerful brake on dismantling the architecture of misogyny wherever it is found. There is an irony here, for education has been crucial to the advancement of women and for many of us, the education which liberated us was provided by the Church’s frontline workers clerical and lay, who have done so much to lift men and women out of poverty and powerlessness and give them access to opportunity. Yet paradoxically it is the questioning voices of educated Catholic women and the men who support them, which the Church hierarchy simply cannot cope with and scorns rather than engaging in dialogue. The Church which regularly criticizes the secular world for its failure to deliver on human rights has almost no culture of critiquing itself and it has a hostility to internal criticism which borders on institutional idolatry.

Today we challenge Pope Francis to develop a credible strategy for the inclusion of women as equals throughout the Church’s root and branch infrastructure, including its decision-making.

Failure to include women as equals has deprived the Church of fresh and innovative discernment; it has consigned it to recycled thinking among a hermetically sealed cosy male clerical elite. It has kept Christ out and bigotry in. It has left the Church flapping about awkwardly on one wing when God gave it two. We are entitled to hold our Church leaders to account for this and other egregious abuses of institutional power.

At the start of his papacy Pope Francis said “We need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church” words a Church scholar described as evidence of Francis’ “magnanimity”. Let us be clear women’s

right to equality in the Church should arise organically from divine justice not ad hoc from papal benevolence.

Pope Francis described female theologians as the “strawberries on the cake”. He was wrong. Women are the leaven in the cake. They are primary handers on of the faith to their children. In the Western world the Church’s cake is not rising, the baton of faith is dropping.

Women are walking away from the Catholic Church in droves for those who are expected to be key influencers in their children’s faith formation have no opportunity to be key influencers in the formation of the Catholic faith.

Just four months ago the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin felt compelled to remark that “the low standing of women in the Catholic Church is the most significant reason for the feeling of alienation towards it in Ireland today”.

Pope Francis has said that “women are more important than men because the Church is a woman”. Why not ask women if they feel more important than men? I suspect many will answer that they experience the Church as a male bastion of patronizing platitudes.

John Paul II has written of the ‘mystery of women’. Talk to us as equals and we will not be a mystery!

Francis has said a “deeper theology of women” is needed. God knows it would be hard to find a more shallow theology of women than the misogyny dressed up as theology which the magisterium currently hides behind.

And all the time a deeper theology is staring us in the face. It does not require much digging to find it. Just look to Christ. John Paul II pointed out that: “We are heirs to a history which has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Transcending the established norms of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. As we look to Christ it is natural to ask ourselves: how much of his message has been heard and acted upon?”

Women are best qualified to answer that question but we are left to talk among ourselves. No Church leader bothers to turn up because we do not matter to them. Back in this hall in 1995 the Jesuit Congregation asked God for the grace of conversion from a patriarchal Church to a Church of equals, where women truly matter. Only such a Church is worthy of Christ. Only such a Church can credibly make Christ matter. The time for that Church is now. Pope Francis, the time for change is now.



CALLING
OUT
LOUD
AND
CLEAR:
FULL
EQUALITY
AND
RIGHTS
FOR
WOMEN

— Ssenfuka Joanita Warry



**SSENFUKA
JOANITA
WARRY**

LGBT Advocate and Founder,
Uganda

My name is Ssenfuka Joanita Warry, I am a Catholic, a lesbian and a human rights defender, who grew up in Uganda among 15 siblings. I am also the executive director of Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG). This organization empowers and advocates for the respect and protection of lesbian, bisexual and queer women in Uganda.

Gender, is a big part of my story - before I am a lesbian, I am a woman.

Everything that affects women in this world affects me. The discrimination against LGBT people goes on top of that. So I am discriminated for being a woman and moreover because I am lesbian.

Being a lesbian in Uganda poses many difficulties. I started having same-sex feelings as early as 7 years old and I had no one available to me for advice.

It wasn't until I turned 14 that I heard that people like me were called lesbians. I found this out from a book called "Delivered from the Powers of the Devil". Please, let that sink in for a minute.

This was also the time when I started fighting with myself about my feelings for women. Having gone to Catholic schools, I remembered what I learned from the Bible; that we are wonderfully created, equal before God, and in His image.

In Uganda there are 193 000 Christian churches- more than schools and hospitals combined, and so you can imagine that a message from the Church is considered a message from God as it is passed on by the men of God.

In Uganda religious and cultural beliefs affect women in a very big way. For instance, it's expected that women are to be married by age 25. Families are made to feel shamed if this hasn't happened. For most lesbians they are forced into marriage by their parents just to save face in society. Sometimes, women are subjected to so-called "corrective rape" or other forms of violence, if their families suspect their daughter may be different.

Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda and hatred towards LGBT persons continues to be fuelled by draconian laws. Lesbians and all LGBT people in Uganda live in fear of mob violence in the places that once were their own communities. An anti-homosexuality bill was introduced in Uganda in 2009 and a local newspaper in Kampala published photographs of homosexuals. My dear friend David Kato paid the ultimate price in 2010 after his photo was published. The newspaper ordered Ugandans to kill us and I was one of the lucky few that was spared.

But what hurts most is the role religious leaders play – or choose NOT to play in the face of such discrimination. By standing by and saying nothing, makes them complicit.

They all openly supported the anti-homosexuality law of 2009, but only advised against the death penalty.

So I ask – why did Pope Francis stop there too? Last October Pope Francis declared "that the death penalty goes against the gospel". He said; "However grave the crime that may be committed, the death penalty is inadmissible because it attacks the dignity of the person". And what about our dignity? Why is homosexuality still being criminalized in parts of the Catholic world? How can two consenting adults who love one another over a long period of time be looked upon as criminals? Why does Church leadership choose to stay quiet and not stand in defense of life!

Our religious leaders hold the key to saving lives of many LGBT people, and not only in Africa. If the Vatican calls out against the criminalization of homosexuality and defends gay people who are ultimately being violated just for who they are, then we could have some hope.

You're probably wondering why I'm still a faithful Catholic. I wonder that too sometimes as do many others who haven't turned away. But,

I believe that it is my duty, my mission and responsibility to effect change in this mentality that surrounds me. I believe I am on a mission from God.

I realized that many of us are running away from the places of worship because of hate preaching and discrimination. At the Catholic Club which I founded, we come together to seek and worship God with dignity and also support one another spiritually. We pray together as Catholics and build a sense of Church, creating that sense of belonging. We seek to give back to the community and organize ways to support others – not just people from the LGBT community but also other needy people around us.

There is much more that I wish to do in the Church but I am stopped, always being limited by my sexual orientation and my gender, which is ultimately what God has created. I believe that things could be different. I want to serve God, as a woman - and as a lesbian woman! Women can take on so many roles. Let no one stand in the way of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, it says "No one lights a light to put it under a bed but on a lamp stand, so all who enter may see the light". My question to the Church is: Must I stay hidden when the Gospel invites me to shine out?



WHERE ARE THE FEMALE ROLE MODELS OF THE CHURCH?

ZUZANNA RADZIK

Theologian and Author, Poland



This is a story about a bookstore, but before I tell you about it, I think you should know a bit about me...

My name is Zuzanna Radzik and I am going to tell you how I became a Catholic theologian working for Christian-Jewish relations. I was raised in a practicing Catholic family in Poland, a predominantly Catholic country with a tiny Jewish community. I never fancied Catholic youth groups and I did not grow up with traditional devotion to Mary and foot pilgrimages were not my cup of tea. I'd have preferred to attend study groups and readings by Church Fathers. And yet, in the summer of 2000, I found myself marching towards Our Lady shrine in Czestochowa. Mostly because many young people went and it was led by cool young Jesuits. Clearly my purpose was socializing. As we were approaching the shrine, the preacher said we should think about what gifts we were bringing to Mary. Under the pressure of the moment I remember praying: I'm here by accident, but I have two hands, you could use me for something. As they say, be careful what you pray for.

In following months Poland entered a time of very heated debates about Polish/Jewish history through the publication of the book *Neighbors* by Jan Tomasz Gross, which described murder committed by the Polish non-Jewish citizens on their Jewish neighbours during the German occupation. In the midst of that, what fascinated me more was the Christian-Jewish story. I found myself sitting on the floor, because it was standing room only, during a panel about Christian-Jewish relations. No one ever told me before how close Judaism and Christianity were. It was like some secret that suddenly got unveiled and I wanted to know more. I was 17, had no particular interests or plans for the future. And out of

the blue, sitting on that floor I started thinking, this is exactly what I want to do in my life! There is so much to be done.

I spent the next couple of years exploring Judaism and Christian-Jewish issues. Frankly speaking, I was not the most studious teenager and liked experiences more than books. So I was hanging out in the synagogue and drinking tea with Holocaust survivors from the Warsaw ghetto. Before going to church and family lunch on Sundays, I would attend the class about *parshat hashavua*, which is a portion of the Jewish Scripture prescribed for reading in a particular week. I discovered Christian Liturgy of the Hours because I envied my Jewish friend having his *siddur*, a prayer book with psalms and prayers to be said 5 times a day. I was endlessly captured by those similarities and fascinated with the new light Judaism shed on my Christianity.

There I was, a teenage Catholic girl becoming a regular in the Jewish community of Warsaw.

But one day, as I was sitting in a cafeteria, someone approached me and said, "You are a Catholic, right? Do you know what Catholics think about the Jews?" Of course I knew, I even memorized the best quotes from *Nostra Aetate* and other Church documents. Not to mention Pope John Paul II, who said that Jews are our older brothers in faith and anti-Semitism is a sin. I was ready to share all that but he quickly interrupted. "Have you been in the church across the street?" I denied. "Go there and check out the bookstore. This is what Catholics really think about the Jews." Disturbed by this conversation, I went immediately to the church's bookstore and contemplated its shelves in a shock.

The place was full of anti-Semitic literature of all sorts; conspiracy theories, lists of Jews hidden among politicians, revisionist history. For months I kept going and reading there, not to support them by buying any. It was clear, that it was not supposed to be there. After some deliberation with myself, I approached the parish priest and asked if he is aware that the literature they are selling is against Church's teaching. "I'm not going to be a censor" - he said in a very unpleasant conversation through an intercom, and explained that he is just renting out the space.

This was such a poor excuse in my eyes! Imagine what he would do if they were selling pornography and not “just” hate and prejudice? But those arguments did not help. Then he said “God bless you,” and hung up. Standing there in front of his closed doors I struggled to stop sobbing and felt stupid that I even tried. It took me another few months before I tried again. This time I approached the bishop’s office and asked for a meeting. After a lot of back and forth I managed to speak to the chancellor of the archbishop. That was as far as things got. It felt like a slap in the face.

I was, almost 19 years old, allowed to buy alcohol, drive and vote, but was not able to get an appointment with my own bishop.

Finally I got my appointment, and it was honestly one of the worst conversations of my life. He disregarded the whole problem, didn’t listen to my arguments. At some point he annoyingly asked; “Why is a laywoman dealing with this issue and not a priest?” Why not? I thought, but said nothing. I knew they disciplined and punished priests by moving them to difficult or poor parishes. The lesson I got on this day is that lay women are far more difficult to stop which probably makes us more scary.

This experience had me question whether or not I would stay in the Catholic Church. I suddenly felt I was surrounded by hypocrites and no one was interested in hearing me out.

The young idealistic Catholic girl had died in me, giving birth to an adult sceptic. I was angry, but anger is also a sign of commitment.

So I stayed. Long conversations with an experienced lay Catholic activist helped the most, although he made it clear: “It is the first time you are disappointed, it will not be the last. You need to get tougher.”

The ultimate irony is that I pushed myself to study Catholic theology because in the end, I wanted to specialize in Christian-Jewish relations since those were in such fractured shape. As for the bookstore, after many failed attempts and five years later, it FINALLY closed. This bookstore was what ended up carving

my path in life. It determined my profession, but also how I approach the Church’s reality. The bookstore experience became a metaphor for what it is to find yourself helpless in front of such a massive institution that tolerated breaking its own principals by giving a place for anti-Semitic teachings. It was about being undermined and ignored as a young woman. And I have to tell you all the degrees and experiences I had ever since are not remedy for that. There is a need of change of culture in the Church to make it truly egalitarian, as there was no male or female! So that young people are taken seriously, women are listened to, and no one is ignored.

You know, still today I feel uncomfortable in the bishop’s office, even when invited. Always ready to be rejected by the Church again, I keep my expectations low, so it does not hurt. I believe I could offer quite a unique expertise, but I don’t want to be treated as a usurper any more. I tried once, offering to facilitate the group of priests who were going to learn about the Holocaust. I heard that I can come but as a translator, because they will reject a woman as an expert. Why would I try again? How many women could say similar stories about their respective fields? I see them around me, better than anyone else but not good enough for leadership positions, because in the Catholic Church those are for priests. I’m with them when they swallow the pain of rejection. Again.

Probably you wonder why we actually still hang out here, despite being treated as second-class citizens. Some say to me, that it is probably for the fight itself. “You always need to have some battle, if not against anti-Semitism then for the women’s rights” – I hear from priests who are my friends. And yes, some ask why I do not leave and find a worship community that suits me. But I feel at home, this is where I belong and Catholic tradition, theology, liturgy and sacraments nourish me. I’m not curious to explore, I don’t want to go anywhere else. Why would you even suggest that? I am a Catholic, just one that cannot stand gender injustice in the global Church, or quiet acceptance of racism and anti-Semitism in the Church in Poland. I’m not going to ask for forgiveness that I’m outraged with it when my bishops are not. I am not making up this struggle; it is real and burning for women who are over half of the members of the Church. My question to the priests, bishops, cardinals and the pope is: why you are not eagerly fighting it with us? Why

you are so often against, ignore it, or – even worst – disregard.

Despite all these difficulties, we’re here, in the Church. Competent, engaged, prepared for work rarely given to us. Please, don’t waste it. Even if angry, our anger shows that we are committed and not giving up on the Church. And also expecting that she will not give up on us and our vocations. Ready to be included and involved. Any time. And the time is now.



SISTER ACT: IS THE CHURCH EVEN RELEVANT TO YOUNG WOMEN?

— Nivedita Lobo and Gayatri Lobo Gajiwala

PHOTOGRAPHER: PRISCILLA DU PREEZ



NIVEDITA LOBO AND GAYATRI LOBO GAJIWALA

Tech Recruiter and High School Educator, India

“Being on the outside”

Niv: I'm Nivedita. I'm an Executive Recruiter for tech companies in Canada and I find the discussion we're having here this afternoon very interesting because it's similar to the one going on in the tech world. In tech, the conversation right now is focused on building diverse leadership teams. In fact we constantly get asked to present more women candidates for executive roles, not because it looks pretty but because it leads to diversity of thought. How can you create a brand for the people unless you take different perspectives into account?

Why would I buy a product created based on the insights of straight white men, when my needs as a young woman are completely different? I think the Church needs to start asking itself the same questions.

One of the reasons I'm here today is because I had a unique childhood. I'm the child of a mixed marriage. My mother is Catholic and my Father is a Hindu. I was raised in an interfaith family. I learnt how to say the rosary along with Sanskrit Shlokas. I read the Bible and Indian mythology. I studied in a convent school and a Jesuit university. The Church definitely shaped me and I learnt a lot of my values from there - to be kind and just and charitable, to find purpose in everything you do, and my favourite, to sing and to celebrate.

Growing up we got a lot of curious looks from other parishioners for being active in the community even though we were not baptized “Who are those strange exotic creatures?” they probably wondered. I don't blame them. I felt like a trespasser, in the Church and in the temple, like my parents were the only reason I was allowed in either place. My “get out of jail free card”. Alone I didn't belong there. It makes me think of this poem:

“So, here you are
too foreign for home
too foreign for here.
Never enough for both.”

Being exposed to different religions at an early age and being gifted with a strong feminist mother meant I had a lot of questions. “Why are there no Catholic Goddesses? Why don't I get to say Mass? I went to Church, why didn't I get the host? Why are all the apostles men?”. A lot of my Catechism classes involved throwing questions at nuns who gave me the old “let's talk about this after class” slip. They weren't ready to deal with this new train of thought and that really impacted my interaction with the Church at the time. I was lucky to have a fantastic principal, also a nun, who took it upon herself to teach religion and together we discussed the Church's view on sex, abortion, love, your relationship with God.

Like the Pope says “Faith is an adventure” and I think all the experiences you have either recharge your faith or diminish it.

I do feel however, that there was a gendered influence on the way we were raised in school, to be nurturing and empathetic and accommodating, so we could be good wives and mothers, the so called “feminine genius”. My brother on the other hand was raised to be strong, demanding, fierce, sure of his place in the world in the Jesuit school across the street. It made me wonder, why was being a “good” person given certain gender specific attributes? And who decided that only men could be in charge?

Gaya: I'm Gayatri. I'm an educator. I work in schools. And when you think about it, my workspace is similar to the Church in terms of hierarchical structures. Interestingly, when you

look at the statistics, the majority of teachers in the world today are women but the majority of teachers in leadership positions, like headships and principals, are men. I'm actually really lucky that the school I teach in is a very equal opportunity workplace, and I have multiple levels of female bosses. It's amazing to see myself represented in various policy decisions made at the top.

I would definitely love to see that in the Church. We need female leadership, because we need female role models in leadership positions. Unfortunately the ones that did exist in the early Church like Mary Magdalene, Phoebe and Priscilla, are downplayed. The exception is Mary the mother of God who is either made out to be such an exotic woman that it is difficult to identify with her, or manipulated to further patriarchal agendas that glorify motherhood and confine women to passive spaces.

Another thing my job made me realise is the importance of identifying stakeholders.

As a teacher, my key stakeholders are my students and everything I do positions their benefit at the forefront. Prioritize the flock, not the shepherd. I've been puzzling over whom the Church identifies as its primary stakeholders. Is it the flock or the shepherd?

What are the Church's learning objectives for Catholics?

Like Nivi, I was raised Hindu-Catholic, but for me there was always this feeling of being an outsider in whatever group I found myself, whether it was the Church or my convent school where I was never “Catholic enough”, or whether it was my Hindu family functions, where I was too “westernized and Catholic” to fit in. I eventually went to boarding school in an Ashram to finish high school there and even there amongst children of hippy parents, and teachers who sought to find their own spiritual path, I was the outlier.

My mother and sister both speak of the wonderful sense of community that the Church has given them. But with my fractured sense of self identity, I don't know if I experienced this sense of community in the same way. I found it suspect, because it was exclusionary, and while I suppose it gave a great sense of stability and community to those who were welcome, I wondered what it was about me that made me feel inadequate. Growing up, I had heard so many homilies on God's unconditional love, but my Catholic card seemed to come with so many strings attached.

I think ultimately it was a battle between my sense of self, my own moral compass, and compromising it in exchange for a “purer” Catholic identity, and I wasn't ready to do that. Having always been on the outside looking in, I could not in good conscience endorse a system that makes outsiders of people for their gender, sexuality, and life choices. How do you reconcile that with the teachings of Jesus, who hung out with “tax collectors and sinners,” basically pious society's outcasts? For the longest time, I struggled to understand why women like my mother didn't just break away from the Catholic Church and just go found their own instead of fighting so tirelessly for change from within. Especially when it seemed like a losing battle. When I asked my mum she said, “Well, it's my Church, too. Why should I give it up? Why should I let male clerics hijack it?” And I think I get that. I understand now why breaking away is in a way almost defeatist.



“What does it mean to be Catholic?”

Niv: My mom says she often gets asked if we're baptized, even after 30 years of marriage. She hates the question because it's used as a kind of litmus test for whether she's been a “good” catholic mother. According to her, the real test will be if we are good human beings. She says “when you die no one is going to ask you if you are baptized. But according to Jesus you are going to be asked if you fed the hungry and gave the thirsty a drink and cared for the sick and those in prison.”

I see *this* as my “catholic” identity. The priority should be to change people's lives, especially those desperately seeking acceptance. Building community is a strong point of the Church, but as an institution it's ancient and slow moving. Millennials think fast and act fast. They are forming their own communities and reinventing their values; diversity, inclusion, free speech, agency, intersectionality. To see none of these values highlighted in the Church makes us feel like we don't belong there. We may not be attending Mass, but we are out there making a difference.

What the Church is doing is turning people like us away and setting hoops for us to jump through. It's as if baptism gives you entry to a club. Would Jesus put up these barriers between him and me? I doubt it. So why are the men in charge trying to control our access to God? My relationship with God is more spiritual. I like to think of God as my friend, not this punishing all powerful entity. And sometimes God is male and sometimes God is female depending on what I'd like to talk to Her about. I connect with God most when I'm engaged in an act of service. I volunteer at a sexual health centre and I practise yoga every day, that is my prayer time.

Of the 3 of us, I'm the one who is not baptised. The truth is, I didn't make a conscious decision to disaffiliate myself from the Church. The older I get the less I saw myself in the rules and rituals. I saw myself in my mother and other strong women I encountered but not in the “ordained leaders”. The Church felt very removed from the reality I was chasing as a young woman; autonomy, agency, empowerment. I didn't want my conversations with God to be censored by a group of men who didn't really want to listen to me.

The priests of the parishes live in a bubble and really need to listen to people to gain some perspective. They're out of touch with the reality of the human experience, especially what it's like to be a young woman today.

My mother tells me that even the gospels we use and the passages we get to hear on Sundays were chosen by the men, so stories about women in our past get filtered out even today. The Bible has different interpretations and obviously the people in power are going to interpret it for their convenience. Just look at the way women have been banned from ordination. I know it's a taboo subject in the Church, but I look at this exclusion and wonder: Am I not created in the image and likeness of God? What if God called me to be a priest? Is the Church saying God cannot make such a call? Personally, I think that defies all logic.

Gaya: I am the “success” story who got baptised when I turned 21. Why? Simple, I wanted to experience Mass in its entirety. After years of Sunday school, confirmation class and catechism class, let's just say I found it frustrating that I wasn't considered Catholic enough to receive the host. And I think there was also this hope that finally, *finally*, I would feel a sense of belonging. But that didn't happen.

The other thing was, I never saw it as an either/or transaction. I didn't see myself losing my Hindu identity in exchange for my Catholic one. I'm baptised, yes, but I still identify as Hindu-Catholic. There is a duality, almost a multiplicity to my spiritual identity that rather than fracturing me, now makes me feel whole, complete. And really when you think about the fact that Jesus was a Jew, and many religions have incorporated the old Hebrew Testament as part of their religions scriptures, I don't see why it is so hard to see how this duality can co-exist. Indian culture teaches us to be accepting of multiple belief systems; I think this whole either/or thing is a very Western concept, although the Church is good at creating hybrid, culture-specific ways to worship when it chooses to. When I was teaching in this little village in Gujarat, the nuns had prayer services in which the students sang bhajans in Gujarati, and had tribal depictions of Mary and Jesus and the stations of the cross on their walls.

When you consider that Easter and Christmas are co-opted from Pagan festivals like the Winter Solstice, well it's clear that the Catholic Church *can* be inclusionary, whatever its agenda. Surely it should be able to see that to be inclusive and accepting now, more than ever is the only way to maintain its relevance?

At a personal level for me the question, unlike with Nive, is, I'm baptised but am I Catholic enough?

Look, you can have a set of rules and follow them all and still, in my opinion, not be a good person. I think being a person with integrity requires a lot more than blind obedience to a list of rules. Every single decision you make in your life needs to be weighed, measured and made in the context of the situation at hand. With compassion, with an acute understanding of the specific situation, and above all, with the aim to do the best you can for the people around you, not just yourself. And to do this you need to build your critical thinking skills. How else can you assess and evaluate every situation with the differentiation it deserves?

In 2016, Pope Francis wrote that “the job of the Church is not to exclude but to welcome, the job of priests is not to render judgment, but to listen and understand the context of people's lives and decisions.” I agree wholeheartedly.

I just want to see evidence of this. But I don't see the Church encouraging critical thought at all. And that's sad, because I think to really embody the teachings of Jesus, you need to be able to approach life, not with a black and white rulebook, but with a well developed ethical and moral code.

“Is the Church relevant today?”

Niv: Is the Church relevant today? I think as young people we need something to believe in now more than ever.

Politicians are failing us, love is digital, loneliness is universal, terrorism is a school event, and there is a large scale refugee crisis - who are we supposed to turn to, where do we put our faith?

I think what we really need is a community which will offer us reassurance and acceptance. Which will say “I see you and I see that you are alone, or hurting, or angry with the cards life has given you and I will help you get off your couch, pick up those cards and step forward with me by your side.”

Instead, often we're faced with judgement about our choices. Celibate men who never experience period pains, pregnancy, domestic violence, sexual abuse on the streets and in workplaces, or the stress of juggling a job, home and family, are calling the shots on



marriage, family planning, domestic violence, sexual abuse, parenting, whom we fall in love with and what we choose to do with our bodies. Sadly there is no place for women's voices. These decisions are made at synods where the non-ordained, which means all women, cannot vote. Well, young women don't want to be a part of this.

While Pope Francis is making attempts to catch up with us, for example, he washed the feet of women and changed the law, his uncompromising stand on the refugee crisis. There are still voices of dissent even amongst his fellow bishops. I would love to see (to quote Elvis) "a little less conversation a little more action".

Gaya: The Church could be relevant, but at the moment, no, I don't think it is. If you alienate the people who need you the most, in favour of not offending existing hierarchies, I think at some point, people who need unconditional love in a time of crisis will disassociate from a system that only fuels their self hate. Millennials are rootless and searching for some sort of foothold in a world that they are actively trying to change for the better.

More importantly, the Church, which is supposed to be a place of sanctuary **does not make me feel safe**. It's sad but true that women suffering abuse prefer to go to the police rather than bishops to seek justice. And what about the violence LGBTQI individuals face in homes and communities? The Church hasn't even started looking there. On the contrary it excludes them too.

Frankly, I am so tired of this constant talk of sin, the double standards, turning a blind eye to abuse within the Church but taking a hard line against relationships between two consenting adults, because of their gender. Young people are suspicious and rightly so. Why should they return to a Church that doesn't even want them?

It's really very difficult to reconcile this attitude with Jesus' attitude. He built people up with love and forgiveness and acceptance. If the Church tells people that it doesn't believe in

them, how are they supposed to believe in themselves?

"Steps the Church needs to take"

Niv: So, where do I see the future of the Church? I think the Church needs to regroup and figure out its values and priorities. Unless it is willing to allow the shift in power dynamics, it is going to lose relevance. The priorities should be those that are disadvantaged at the centre and everyone working together to help them. What Pope Francis advocates for migrants can apply here too: Build bridges not barriers.

Create spaces for the voices of young people to be heard and listen to them. Get into their skins and their experience of the world. Learn from them and respect their agency to change the world. They are moving ahead at a tremendous speed in a virtual world. They cannot be stopped, but they do need your steadying hand. Be honest and transparent and non-judgmental. Help them to live the gospel message of love, justice and peace.



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS, WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT A WOMAN'S VOCATION?

JOANA GOMES, PORTUGAL

Project Director,
Jesuit Refugee Services,
Chad



My name is Joana. Three years ago I was working in a school in Lisbon, Portugal. I had everything our society makes us want, a good job, a car, the comfort of a family. But I was only 99% happy, I felt there was something missing. At a certain point it was clear that it was not a question of adding that 1% but of replacing the other 99%.

In 2015 I had an experience as a volunteer that marked the beginning of a major change of my life. For three weeks I worked in Sicily in a migrant centre that hosted refugees that had just traversed the Mediterranean sea. If I asked these people what they wanted to be in the future, they would look at me, lost and say "What is future?" It was then I understood that it was what I wanted to do in life; work with refugees.

After that volunteer experience I did go back to my life in Portugal, but in 2016 it was clear that God was calling me to do more and I asked to end my job contract. My boss did not let me because I did not have another job, and gave me a sabbatical license. I returned to Sicily, where I stayed for a month directing the project where I had been volunteering the summer before. It was one of the hardest experiences of my life.

In one of the centres hosting migrants, refugees organised a riot and I was the only person that did not take refuge inside the offices. I was surrounded by more than 30 big men that were shouting and demanding better life conditions. I was dying of fear as I stayed in the middle of them. I tried to listen to them and I tried to create bridges. This helped me to

confirm the call to work with refugees.

Returning home I decided to stop in Rome and knock at Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) doors. I told them that I had the certainty that my path of work was through them and that I was available to go where no one wanted to go. At the end of a week I had a mission; project director of Gozbeida, in Chad.

This major change in my life was not well received in Lisbon. My family thought it was crazy what I had decided to do, my friends were scared. How could I explain that I was changing certainty for uncertainty, the comfort of our developed world for the simplicity of a house without electricity or running water. But I had inside me the certainty of this path, of MY path.

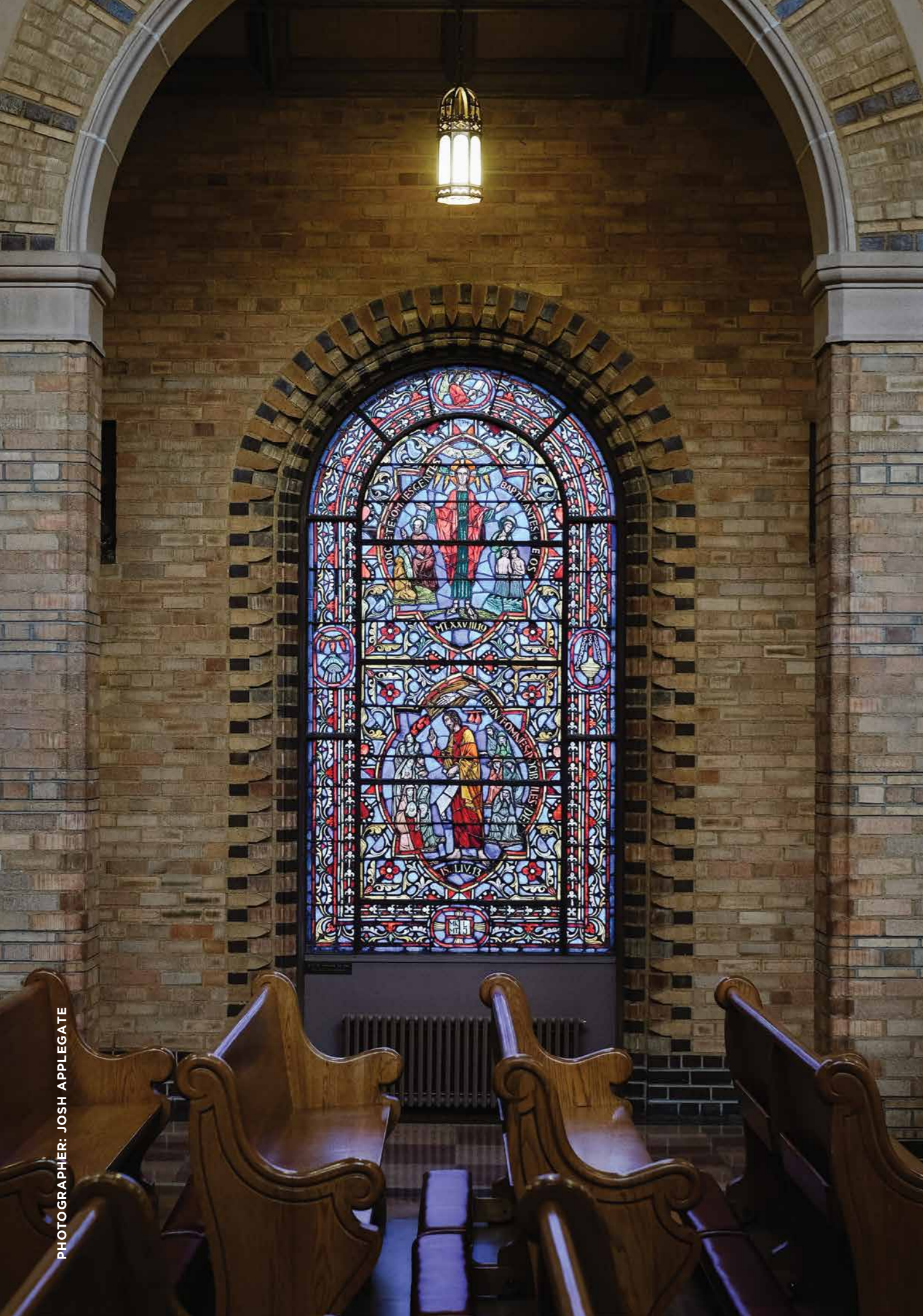
I was questioned in many different forms: "Why go away? You won't meet anyone to marry? Would you not like to have children? Listen you are in that age...." We are formatted for a specific happiness profile: study - work - marry - have children. They sell us that at school, on TV, in the press and some times even the same catholics; you marry or you become a nun.

In Chad I faced the same reality. Women my age were mothers of 5 children. Girls start to abandon school

because they are "given" in marriage. Without their opinion or their choice. Once a refugee teacher who I liked a lot open her heart. "What fortune, you had the option of not marrying". We women of "developed" countries think we already reach the threshold of development, but in reality, how many of us dream of a future that does not go with the normal? How many women accept conceiving that happiness could mean a dedication to the world and not to a home?

When I left for Chad I heard my calling, clear as could be in my inner self that had called me to a different vocation. Today, it continues to be clear that there are more missions in the Church than just to get married, become a nun or to be celibate. In reality, with my testimony and sharing my story I have understood that many other women feel the call to do more, but do not know how to answer. Do not know how to contradict society. And it is easy to understand why. The other day I was looking at the saints celebrated during the week, all the women saints I found had been nuns. When is a woman to be considered a saint just for the good job she did? For the good person she is?

This change goes through the young ones. Invite them to dream. Make courageous invitations. Do not fear to encourage them to be different, to go farther in their choices. Do not format them for happiness concepts, but let them feel the call from God. And where is the Church in the middle of all of it? We need examples for young people, role models of different perspectives.



PHOTOGRAPHER: JOSH APPLGATE

The Church I belong to has to be alive. Accept the different vocations and missions and give to all the same value. Recognise the importance of good mothers, good wives, good nuns as well as all good bosses, good humanitarians, good coordinators. We need a Church that recognises these skills and helps to multiply them, not suffocate them or put them on a mass production factory. In Gozbeida, in the Celebration of the word at which I participate on Sundays, I see a church full of women and children. What is incredible is the celebration is in French and the women only speak Arabic or the local dialects. But even then they assist Sunday after Sunday in the 2h celebration. This demonstrates how women already are in the Church! What is missing is only to integrate them, to accept them and value them. Recognise them.

I would like to finish with a story. A year ago I was participating in the Women's day commemoration in the refuge camp of Goz-Amir. An old women, a teacher in one of our schools, talked in the name of the women of the camp. A thin, short woman took the

microphone and started to talk. Her voice was not well heard, so I signed her to get near the microphone. With more conviction she continued her talk (in arabic).

I accompanied her, smiling and blinking my eyes and with this she got animated, started to gesticulate and her quiet voice started gaining life.

I cheered at the end and waited for translation to confirm what I already knew. She used a beautiful metaphor

“Women are like water, life does not exist without her”

And with this symbolism she reminded me of the importance of protecting women's rights, starting with girls and young women.

I wanted to use this metaphor today, here. I wanted to bring all these voices of women that we cannot hear. A woman is like water. Let her run and she will irrigate the world!



CAN ART ENCOURAGE GENEROSITY?

— Costanza Alvarez de Castro



COSTANZA ALVAREZ DE CASTRO

Artist, El Salvador

I attended the Voices of Faith International Women's Day event in 2017.

Marguerite Barankiste, who survived the 1994 genocide in Burundi and saved thousands of lives, was the speaker whose story touched me the most. All stories touched me but I was so impressed by her deeds, her courage and her strength.

I realized that the majority of the testimonials I was listening to could have never happened to me, ever, because of my everyday life here in Rome, being completely different from some of the worlds' realities. Of course, I knew that already, but the feeling this time was stronger. Then I heard Stephanie Lorenzo's story, she was around my age, we shared a similar background and had the same opportunities in life. She had already done so much for the world and I felt a "moral obligation" to try to do my tiny part to help others as well.

The days that followed Voices of Faith, I thought about what could I do to help those in need. Since I'm a painter, I decided to create a

platform that would bring Art and Aid together, and named this platform "A painting for Marguerite". The proceeds of our first project in June of last year went directly to Marguerite's educational activities in Rwanda.

Now, my friends and I, who helped me with this initiative have a new project called "Cycling to education". The goal is to buy bicycles for girls attending school in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, in Malawi. This project will be financed through a wonderful photograph by Luca Catalano Gonzaga. The starting price is 4,000 euros but you are welcome to donate as much as you wish. For those of you here in attendance, you will also find more information about the artwork and the project outside and those of you watching on the livestream can donate on www.apaintingformarguerite.org.

Thank you in advance for your generous support which will make such an impactful difference to these girls.



POWER TO TRANSFORM: WILL THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SURVIVE THE 21ST CENTURY? PANEL MEMBERS

Moderator:
Professor Tina Beattie,
Theologian and Director Catherine of Siena College



MARY MCALEESE
President of Ireland
1997-2011



**FATHER LUKE
HANSEN SJ**
Jesuit and Writer



NICOLE SOTELO
Journalist and Author



ALINA OEHLER
Theologian and Journalist



**ELISA ORBANANOS
HERNANDO**
Regional Programs Office,
Jesuit Refugee Service,
Great Lakes



**PROFESSOR
TINA BEATTIE**
Theologian and Director
Catherine of Siena College

Tina: Welcome to this panel discussion.

Pope Francis says this about dialogue, "Men and women, young people and adults, communicate differently. We need to develop certain attitudes that express love and encourage authentic dialogue. Instead of offering an opinion of advice, we need to be sure that we've heard everything the other person has to say. Never downplay what they say or think, even if you need to express your own point of view. Keep an open mind. Don't get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions, but be prepared to change or expand them."

So I feel really privileged to be chairing this opportunity for dialogue when of course we're not only in dialogue with one another, but with our brothers in the Vatican. And we're delighted to know that even though they can't be with us today, they're certainly watching, and perhaps watching is the first road on the step to listening!

So, may I welcome our panelists. Former President of Ireland **Mary McAleese** our keynote speaker, needs no introduction. She's already scintillated us with her visions of the Church. And the theme of Mary's presidency was building bridges, and I think that's very much what we're trying to do here today.

Luke Hansen, a Jesuit priest, who has had much experience in the past working with people with mental illness, with people in Guantanamo Bay, with young people, with those on the margins of society, which constituted part of his vocation to the priesthood. And Luke is now studying at the Gregorian University here in Rome.

Elisa Obananos Hernando, is a regional programs representative for Jesuit Refugee Service in the Great Lakes region of Africa. She brings with her a great deal of insight and experience into the struggles of African women in particular and those who face the double jeopardy of gender and poverty.

Nicole Sotelo is from the USA. She is a journalist who served as a Young Voices columnist for the National Catholic Reporter, and her writing has appeared in numerous publications, including the New York Times.

Alina Oehler, who is also a writer, a German theologian and journalist. She currently freelances for various newspapers and also has a weekly column in Die Zeit in Germany.

So I'm going to begin with a question for each speaker, which allows them to position themselves, and then we'll follow that up with a discussion.

Mary, the question we're addressing in this panel: Will the Church survive the 21st century? Until very recently, Ireland was regarded as a Catholic country, but today, it seems that the Church there has lost much of its influence. Based on your experience with the Church and society in Ireland, what do you think the main issues are and what transformations might be needed for the Church to regain trust and credibility, not just in order to survive, but to flourish? And, of course, I'm asking that question particularly about women and the Church.

Mary McAleese: It's a question many of us are posing. Bishops are posing it. We will have a conference in May which poses the question whether the Church in Ireland has even five more years left. So there is a sense in Ireland, bearing in mind we are a Christian country for fifteen hundred years, since the time of Patrick. We have been an overwhelmingly Catholic country since the Reformation.

My own background, I was born and raised a Catholic in Belfast, one of the eldest of nine children. Because we were Catholics, we lost our home. My parents lost their business. My father lost his sanity. My brother was almost murdered. On the morning that we were married, two of our wedding guests, Catholics, were murdered in sectarian attacks. We lived in the area of Belfast with the highest density of sectarian murders, bar none.

So that's my hinterland. And out of that hinterland, I had to ask myself, what values did I want to bring to my lived life. My husband Martin and I decided that our values were the values of the gospel that we learned through the Catholic Church.

This is what we were taught by our parents, by our teachers; the belief that the wonderful commandment to love one another no matter what was actually capable of transforming and healing even the worst hurts, even the greatest hurts, the murders, the killings, the bombings, the intercommunal conflict. And that's where the theme of building bridges came from when I became president.

So I believe that gospel. And I think that many, many people in Ireland still hope and believe in that gospel of hope and love and believe in its power. And we've seen it in many ways; we've seen it in individual ways. But one of the things that we have never seen, because our Church became an empire, we're only now seeing the final dismantling of that patriarchal, misogynistic empire.

So we've actually never seen our Church flourish in the way that I think Christ intended. So we're now at a moment when the most educated generation in the history of Ireland is demanding that that's the Church they want, and if it's not the Church that is available, well, they'll walk away. And they will create other structures; they will be in other places. They will not be people who are faithless, but they will be people who maybe simply lost faith in the capacity of institutions to drive something as wonderful as the power of love.

Because the gravitational pole of patriarchy, empire, misogyny and homophobia has drained, in many ways, respect not just for the Church, but I think the danger is that it would drain it for the gospel itself. And that's what keeps me in the Church, the very idea that they would reduce Christ and the commandment of love to something so tiny and small when it is something so extravagant and wonderful and healing.

And we've seen what it can do in our lives. Over the fourteen years I was president, people who, over their dead bodies, would come to our home little by little by little, and the bridges were built. So I've seen it work; I've seen what it can do. But will the Church survive? I think the hierarchical Church will not survive; the clericalized Church will not survive. And that will be good.

But just how long it might take or whether I'll be around to see it, or whether my children will still be Catholics, and my grandchildren, that I don't know. But frankly, I did my best. The people who let ME down in the job that I was given the vocation as a Catholic mother and a Catholic woman, the people who let me down

are not very far from here.

Professor Tina Beattie: Luke, your presence here today suggests that when the clericalism collapses, we will still have a few good men among us to act. You're a rare breed in the Church today, a young priest with a deep commitment to supporting to role of women in the Church, as indeed, is evidenced by your being here with us today.

And your generation of priests is pivotal in helping us to make the kind of changes we're addressing. But, of course, we know that priests come from many cultures and contexts, with many different cultural perspectives that they bring to the Church. So, given all the challenges that you face, I wonder if you can share what the most formative experiences have been in shaping your formation as a priest and your perspective, and how is your conviction fed regarding the involvement of women in the Church in the 21st century?

Father Luke Hansen: When I think about the most formative experiences I've had as I've gone through Jesuit formation and now as a priest, I have to add today to that list of experiences, because it's experiences like this, hearing the voices of women, hearing diverse stories, and women who are willing to ask critical questions and to really have the courage and the openness to listen to those questions and to take them seriously, to let them touch my heart, for them to shape my action, then, as a minister and as a priest in the Church.

One of the great gifts of my Jesuit formation has been a strong presence of women basically at every stage of formation, whether they've been professors of ethics, sacraments, even homiletics. The person who has taught me the most about Ignacian discernment is a Dominican sister who was my spiritual director for three years.

I've been preparing for ministry with women, studying with women, working with women. I'm going to talk briefly about my experience as a deacon at a women's prison. But I always went to the prison with one or two of the female students at my school of theology, so I got to see their ministry to these women up close. I got to hear their stories, their frustrations, their

hopes for the Church. So I'd like to talk about a couple privileged places where I've listened to some of these stories, and one of them is that women's prison, which is near San Francisco, California.

I co-taught a course on forgiveness with one of my female classmates at the Jesuit School of Theology, and in this course, every week we heard women, many from the United States, some immigrants from different parts of the world, share stories of sexual violence against them. It wasn't just one or two women in the classroom; it was basically every woman in the classroom. We heard about their struggle to forgive themselves, to forgive the perpetrators of this violence, the inability to forgive because the pain is so deep. Forgiveness can sometimes feel like permission, or that what happened was okay. And it never is.

Now, as a priest, I have an opportunity to preach, and sometimes I've preached on the topic of sexual violence, and I've used the word 'rape.' And the few times I've done this, every time, women have come up to me and said that this is a reality in their life and the lives of so many women in the pews each week, but it's something they've never heard preached from the pulpit, which raises the question, how many issues that affect women's lives, day in and day out, every Sunday, are not being addressed? Because in many cases, priestly formation mainly happens in a man's world.

So I'm really grateful for the many ways in which women have been a part of my formation and the way that friendships with women have really formed me, friends who have been willing to challenge me, have asked critical questions. They've asked me to listen, to be attentive, to look around me, to notice the fact that I, as a man in the Church, can pursue my dreams, pursue my sense for how God is calling me, but they can't.

And what I've learned from listening to these women is that it's not a desire to hold power over another person, but a desire to be empowered and to use the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them for service in the Church.



IF THEY DON'T GIVE YOU A SEAT AT THE TABLE, BRING A FOLDING CHAIR

— Shirley Chisholm

And I've heard too many stories of those gifts not being recognized or being excluded, implicitly, explicitly.

So why I am here? I think, fundamentally, because I want to see every person's gift be valued and embraced and empowered in the Church that we live in. We need that. I'm moved and inspired by the voices we've already heard at this event, which represent in so many ways the dreams that I have for the Church, to see more partnerships between men and women, both in formation, in ministry, and in leadership.

Professor Tina Beattie: Elisa, your work with Jesuit Refugee Service takes you to the front line of the struggle for justice among some of the world's poorest and most marginalized people. I'm interested because I know that you have an interest in power and how we understand it. So with regard to your understanding of power, how might women exercise power beneficially in the Church today for a transformed church.

Elisa Orbananos Hernando: The first thing I want to say is, as you indicated, I'm very interested in power. But normally, our focus on power is a negative thing, because in those contexts we are used to talking about power as a vehicle of oppression, and it also is a tool of this patriarchal system the Church seems inclined to.

That is one side. The other side, and the power I want to talk about is power as an opportunity, as a tool for social change, for social justice, and for gender justice.

I think we women already have the power, and it's obvious. We are the majority of the parishioners, we are the majority of the working class all around the world. The point is that power is not always visible. We have to make it visible; we have to come to the front lines.

For example, today in my country, many of my friends, even family members, are supporting a feminist strike just to show how powerful we are, and the amazing things we are doing are ordinary things, but they are in fact, extraordinary. So can you imagine just for a while if all women around the world just stopped for one day? It's not even the Church, but society would collapse. So we have

the power to promise, when it comes to the decision-making level. Then, both in Church and society, women are set aside.

And that's a problem, because, okay, women have different necessities, so they need different answers. Since the decisions are being made by men, the official discourse is necessarily incomplete, because there's one part missing. And it's also a huge problem, from my point of view, because then we are using that negative power. That women are constantly being set part is a kind of violence. It's a structural violence, and the perpetuation of women as second-class citizens. That is also perpetrating the patterns of an unequal society, it is legitimizing another kind of violence that could be domestic violence or sexual and gender-based violence that is perpetuating. In the end, the feminization of poverty, because we are second-class citizens.

So trying to answer the question, where to focus our energies, I think we have to not just make our voice heard, but also be listened to. We are talking; we are always talking. But I think the time has come to act. Being here in this space, makes our voice even stronger together, but remember love is shown more in deeds than in words.

Professor Tina Beattie: I think Ignatius also said something along the lines of, "Preach Jesus constantly, and use words if you must." I know there's an American theorist, Jean Beth Galston, who wrote very eloquently on the two kinds of power that have been used in history. She said it's really wrong to say that women have been powerless, but there's 'potestas,' which is the institutionalized, structured power of the law and of hierarchies and institutions. And there's 'potentia,' which is the charismatic power that women often wield when we must use charm, and I guess we must use feminine genius and our mystery and all that to get what we want.

And her argument is that both kinds of power can be used for good or for ill, and we really need to find a way, even as women gain access to potestas, to retain within our world that potentia, which is relational and intuitive and charismatic.

So, Nicole, as a Catholic journalist and writer, you've a particular influence as well on the effects of power and abuse. I'm very interested that you've spoken of women silencing

themselves in order to keep safe in the context of male domination.

What kind of empowerment do you think women need in order to break out of that self-imposed silence, and how might women's voices challenge existing oppressive power structures in the Church of the 21st century?

Nicole Sotelo: I'm going to start with a story to respond to that. Throughout my life, I have been witness to the circumstances of abuse. And in the context of the Catholic Church, one of those moments took place when I was twelve years old. That year, a priest who had served at our church in school, was arrested while trying to flee the country while on probation for having sexually abused children. What I remember about that time as a young girl, where the mothers would gather outside of our school to pick the children up, is that they were whispering about it. I knew it was a serious issue. I didn't understand all the details. But what I remember is that the mothers handled it by whispering. No teachers spoke to us about it, and the priests never mentioned it on Sunday. Silence.

And I mention this story because I think that's often what happens in our Church today.

Many Catholics, in the face of abuse, oppression, or inequality, we keep silent.

In the United States, there's a wonderful psychologist, Carole Gilligan, who has done extensive research on at what ages both women and men begin to silence themselves so as to fit in to the patriarchal paradigm. For young women, that begins at the age of ten, eleven, and twelve, the same age I was during this situation.

And what happens is that these young women like myself, we look to the older women to see how we are to be women, and we see our older women silencing themselves on issues of importance. Women who have much of our power only through relationship, fear speaking out and ruining our relationships, and losing the little bit of power we have when so many women choose to keep silent. But the good news is that in the United States and in many

countries around the world, there are Church justice movements. And part of their goodness in the Church is that they're encouraging women and men to speak up, to tell their story and in doing so, they give other people courage who may have felt that they were the only ones. And together, we work for change.

Most importantly I think that young girls in our Catholic Church today are able to see new models of what it's like to be a Catholic woman. They're no longer forced to make a decision between staying in the Church and being silent or leaving. Instead, they're able to see that they can stay in the Church and be who they are and speak their truth, and work together for a more loving, a more just Church, as has been modeled by Jesus Himself.

Professor Tina Beattie: There's certainly not much whispering going on here today. I'm sure we have many such role models among all the amazing women who have spoken here. Alina, I mentioned building bridges in the context of Mary, but in a way, you are also a bridge builder. You're a young female theologian and journalist who still speaks critically of the Church as a men's club. But you've also described yourself as a liberal who became a conservative.

Now, women of my generation are often told we are disgruntled, middle-aged feminists and that young women are very happy with the Church as it is. What is your experience as a young woman who must have seen many of your friends leave the Church. How do you understand the liberal-conservative divide in that context? What do you think is the most effective way for young women like yourself to work for change in the Church?

Alina Oehler: You're right, I've seen many of my friends leave the Church. I grew up in a very Catholic region in the south of Germany and in my childhood it was completely normal to be Catholic. But when coming back home from church on Sundays in my village, I couldn't find anyone my age; only old people are there. Because the younger ones, my generation, they already left.

And when I meet them for coffee and we talk about what I'm doing, they can't understand that I studied theology. They ask me, "How can you still be loyal to this club? You can be anything. You can't achieve anything big as a female theologian." So they don't understand me and question me all the time. I think that's

an important point I want to make. Most of the young people in Germany, they imagine the Church like she appears in the media, as a men's club.

Now, you could say, but we already have women in leadership positions in German dioceses, and of course, that's true. But do you know them? Do you see them? Well, the insiders do, yes? But the public does not.

Looking back at the history of the Church, we can find so many great examples when the intellectual potential of women had been important and visible. For instance, I think of St. Catherine of Siena, who was a consultant to the Pope, or Hildegard of Bingham, or Edith Stein, just to name three.

But all those women died a long time ago. I ask you, can you imagine today a woman standing next to the Pope being his consultant, for example, like Catherine of Siena is pictured in many paintings? Can you imagine that? I think it's not easy. I brought an old picture that I found by accident in a priest's house, and as you can see, it shows a bishop and a woman during the liturgy in Austria. I was so excited when I saw this for the first time, because I had never seen a woman next to a bishop in such a high position in the liturgy. I posted it on facebook and asked "What is this? Can you explain it to me?" An old professor I knew well versed in church history wrote a comment: "Ah, that's nothing unusual. We know, we had that" and so on. My secular friends reacted and wrote, "No, it's not usual. I've never seen something like this. What is this woman? What is it about?"

So I think as long as a picture like this seems to be unreal to us or to my generation, how can we expect young and ambitious women to picture themselves in the Church if they only picture bishops and popes and priests when it comes to leadership? And of course, it's like Mary McAleese said in her keynote speech:

It's not only visibility, it's also about having a voice.

The second point is, there are, nevertheless, women in the Church who are happy. I would consider myself a happy Catholic woman,





because as you introduced me, I started to study theology as a liberal who wanted to change the Church, like any political system can be changed. But then I had some very moving spiritual experiences during the liturgy concerning the sacrament of the Eucharist. When I studied here in Rome I got a deeper understanding of my faith, and it was a very rich time for me spiritually. From then on, I wrote some articles for German newspapers in which I took conservative positions. But to be honest, I don't like the liberal-conservative divide, especially in Germany. We Catholics are becoming a smaller and smaller group. I don't know what it will be in twenty or thirty years. The German Church is rich and there will be buildings. But will there be people? So I think we need to focus on what we have in common and we have to find a way to bring the joy of the gospel to the people and make this visible. Of course, women need to have leadership positions in order for this to happen.

Referring to the last part of your question, I think one effective way for young women like me to work for change in the Church in everyday life could be, that we are confident enough to make our voice heard on every occasion possible, because women are still not taken seriously in parishes and in the hierarchy. I've had this experience so many times. I'm married, and every time I'm with my husband in some church surroundings and I'm being introduced, I'm not of great interest, because I'm the wife. And then, when they get to know, oh, she studied theology and she's a journalist, I suddenly I become interesting.

So I think we desperately need a change in mentality here. We women can work on that, too, by challenging the clerics. I think we should do that, and every woman should do this. I think before you can change the system, you need to change the mentality, because you have to get the men on your side.

Professor Tina Beattie: And just to clarify, I think all the women who are speaking here today are happy in the Church or we wouldn't be here. We're told, there are young women who are happy in the Church as it is. So stop trying to change it because the young women like it as it is. But clearly, we all are happy women in the Church, but we still want to change it.

This idea of hearing women's voices, women not speaking in whispers, telling stories, it's something many of you have said today.

Even in Pope Francis's theology, he's a narrative theologian. He recognizes that meaning comes not through abstract doctrinal arguments, but through gestures and stories that root the gospel in people's lived realities. In order for that to happen, we need safe spaces in which we can speak and be heard and don't have to speak in whispers, and don't teach our daughters that the best way to survive in your relationships in your life is to speak in whispers or not say anything. We have such a safe space here with many thanks to the Jesuits for creating it.

But we still know that while the Church should be for all of us that safe space, actually, I suspect for most modern women who remain in the Church, it's the space where we most often have to censor ourselves if we don't want to lose those relationships and become very uncomfortable in the context we're trying to work in.

And with that in mind, I want to come to you, Elisa, because of your experience of African women. I know from having lived there for many years that African cultures are great storytelling cultures. Women have amazing stories to tell. But in my experience, the stories you hear when you get a group of African women on their own without any men in the room are often very different than the stories they'll tell the men, because the men won't listen to certain stories. How does that work among African women that you work amongst, making their voices heard? And telling the whole story, not just the bits that will be approved of.

Elisa Orbananos Hernando: I think I'm lucky enough to work for the Jesuit Refugee Service. One of the core groups we work with are women, victims of sexual and gender-based violence. One of the most important things we try to do is to accompany them. That means being with and listening to them. Our mission is to accompany, to serve, and to advocate for them. We really try to do so by being with them and by pushing them to raise their voices.

So what we try to do is say, "Okay that

happened to you, but now you have a new life, you have a new opportunity. So speak out, and not just about what happened, but about your dreams. What do you want to do? What do you want to become from now on?" It's a pity, because, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but what I see in the African Church is not what I would love to see. There's half the story missing.

Joana before was saying that, those women are already in that Church. But Warry was also saying that they don't feel safe in that Church. I really think we have to change that. As a Church, maybe it should be a safe space, an open space.

Because Sunday after Sunday they go to Mass, but they don't share their experiences and their feelings because, first of all, they don't feel safe, they are afraid to speak out, second because they don't feel supported.

They are the base and the basis of society, and even more, those women who really have been victims of the war experiences, you can imagine, they need to speak up. They need to be strong enough to show the power they have inside to transmit those stories to their children, to new generations. And I really think it's a pity and an opportunity. We're just wasting it if we don't open the doors in the Church for them. That should be the safest space for them and it's not. So all that I can say is, let's open the doors and our ears as Church members.

Professor Tina Beattie: Mary, as you were speaking, I had this wonderful image about how Martin and you had created a safe space, in a space riven with bitterness and violence and conflict. Somehow, in the presence you created, people began to feel safe to build those bridges and talk across the abyss, and to forge a future out of that. What would it take for people to feel that way about the Church? In Ireland, for example, where so many people feel it's the last place they will go with their stories of vulnerability and hurt and exclusion. We know, even with the LGBTQI issue in terms of the forthcoming world meeting on the family, there is every effort to push people, still, outside the frame. What must the Church do to become a safe space, like your home was

during the troubles, for people from both sides to listen and make peace?

Mary McAleese: I can give a couple of examples of things that I think work and would help. They come from my own direct experience. I'm the oldest member of the panel. I have a bus pass to prove it. Martin and I grew up in a conflict-ridden society that descended into civil war between Catholics and Protestants. Christians, God help us. We both lived in Protestant neighborhoods as Catholics, and most of my friends growing up were Protestants. One of the things I learned is how easy it is to live right next-door to people, cheek by jowl, in complete ignorance of each other. And what is worse? You think you know each other just because you live beside each other.

Let me take that to the Church. We have a very stratified Church, very, very caste-ridden, if you look. And at each level or section, we hear talk amongst ourselves. The next level talk amongst themselves. At the very top, they definitely just talk among themselves. The danger is, because we belong to the one Church and very often use similar language, drawing from the Gospels, that we think we understand how each other thinks. But we haven't created the conduits to each other, whether the talking, the dialogue, the listening conduits. And those conduits are utterly essential.

That's what we did in our house. We created actual conduits, not just for photo opportunities with nice Protestants or nice Catholics, but photo days when photographs didn't matter, but talking to each other did. When I started working at Queens University in Belfast in the 1980s, two reports landed on the desk of the vice chancellor. One said we didn't employ enough Catholics; one said we didn't employ enough women. So how were we going to change that? It wasn't just enough to dialogue. That was important. But you also had to have structure and you had to have training. So we developed a training program for all our staff to try and introduce each of us, including me, to the baggage that we carry with us that doesn't allow us to stand in the shoes of the other, that dares to tell us that we actually think we know the other, but we don't.

So, to become aware of the otherness of the other. We created a huge, big training program. What's remarkable to me is how very quickly a university that was essentially being

accused of bigotry against Catholics went from having a very low representation to having a very presentable and decent representation of Catholics. We weren't so successful with women. What did that tell me? It told me that the sectarian impulses were much easier to change, because they only went back to the Reformation, seriously, I'm being serious here. The embedded ones against women, they went back right down to patria potestas, Roman law, Judaic law, all the way down through Church law. Much more deeply embedded.

So if I were to be asked what we need in our Church at the moment, we need not just dialogue in the strata, but dialogue up through the strata, and we need structure. For example,

I would insist that every single bishop and every single prelate in leadership positions would undergo equal opportunities training. I don't know any who have. And people can have sensitivity to women in the Church, but unless you've done the training, the intensity and profound understanding you have really hasn't been deepened enough to be able to promote change.

And the final thing I would say is, we had a conflict in Ireland that lasted for centuries. We got a Good Friday agreement in 1998, thank God, twenty years ago, that helped us to create a process for peace. It took a lot of effort to put that together. But that gave us a structure for the future through which we *could* dialogue with each other; common values, common language, parity of esteem, shared governance. So, not easy. Easy to put on paper.

A road map to a future of equality written in an international treaty. This is what our Church now needs, that level of structure. Invite women.

Take our bishops away and give them equal opportunities training. Then say to them, now we need to talk about how we put structure on this and get our own navigational road map to future equality for all in the Church.







Actually, Bishop Farrell said the other day, "It's a process." But as I said earlier, like the peace process, you have to have the navigational tools; you have to have the structure. We absolutely do not have that currently in the Church; strategy and structure.

Professor Tina Beattie: Alina if we're talking about this need to create spaces to hear the other, and even if we drop the language, liberal/conservative, we know that the Church is fractured between polarized positions. It's very difficult, I think, probably, for a young woman like you who sees good on both sides. How would you create a space to persuade those young women who say to you, you're crazy, why are you still doing this? I say, well, listen, and let's talk to each other and understand each other, and create a safe space for us all to be in the Church. Because as G. K. Chesterton said of the Catholic Church, "Here comes everybody." It's not like that today. How can we make it like that?

Alina Oehler: I trust the Holy Spirit, if we really have a discussion at higher levels, that there will be a solution. Of course, I can think of some solutions, but it's hard for me to tell, because it's not so realistic, I think, that this will happen in the next five years, I'm afraid to say. But, of course, we need to have in visible positions in the front row to change the feeling of young women towards the society so that they can know to whom they can turn to, to whom they can talk to. One possibility could be to think how you can empower lay people, in general, more in the Church. It's also a question about lay men, by the way. And in earlier times,

I like to look back into the tradition of the Church in earlier times, lay men could become cardinals, for example. So why shouldn't this be an option for women too? It would be a first role position, and it would be visible, and it would be in the Vatican.

So why can't we talk about something like this.

Professor Tina Beattie: Women cardinals, why not? I understand there's a tiny little bit in canon law that could be changed tomorrow and we could have women cardinals the next day, because many of us are theologically educated enough. But why not?

I want to come to that, though, because it's following on what we're talking about, the impatience that so many feel. I'm reminded when you say, "We trust the Holy Spirit" there's a priest stranded on a desert island and praying for a rescue, and a helicopter goes by and he says, "No, don't worry." And then a ship goes by and he says, "No, it's all right. Please, God, send someone to rescue me." And the Holy Spirit says, "Well, for God's sake, I've sent a helicopter and a ship. What are you waiting for?"

So we can't just wait for the Holy Spirit to rescue us. We have to look for where the Holy Spirit is sending along the means to do so. Often, when I begin to feel, am I saying too much too loudly, I go back to Martin Luther King's letter from Birmingham Jail where he says, "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed."

For years now, I have heard the word 'wait.' This 'wait' has almost always meant 'never.' We must come to see that justice too long delayed is justice denied. That's his response to the Alabama clergyman who, in a unique and rare moment of interfaith and ecumenical dialogue in the early 1960s, managed to join ranks Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, a Rabbi. The only person missing was a Muslim, because in those days, perhaps, Islam wasn't quite the presence it is today in our societies. If it had been now, there might have been an Imam there as well.

But when men of God have a common enemy, my God, do they get together. I think today, often, that common enemy is women. There's nothing like forging into faith and ecumenical unity to gang up against women. Women want some tangible, substantial sign that it's worth hanging on in there and struggling, because, look, change is happening. We can point to it; we can see it.

So, Nicole, let me ask you, if you could see one thing that would be possible now to say that to women, that you are winning this struggle, stay in and struggle with us, what would you like to see?

Nicole Sotelo: I think, in the long run, I would agree with what has been shared about needing to work for a comprehensive plan to integrate women into decision-making roles, not just fitting them into current clerical molds, but really, as a Church, reimagining what does healthy and holy and Gospel-rooted leadership look like to meet today's needs.

But I think one thing that could happen very easily, tomorrow, would be to have Catholic pastoral councils set up in every diocese, in areas where perhaps there's less representation now in diocesan leadership while we work toward that comprehensive plan. But in the meantime, we could have Catholic pastoral councils that could help the diocesan leaders hear from the underrepresented areas of our Church, both on women's issues, but also on issues of race, class, and LGBT issues. It's something very simple that wouldn't take much in terms of resources and could happen tomorrow. And I think that would be a wonderful step towards a future that would really speak to our Church today.

Professor Tina Beattie: Luke, what one thing would you change so that we can point to something in the Church and say the change is real and it's happening?

Father Luke Hansen: Speaking from my cultural context in the United States, something that has raised hopes and excited people is the Papal Commission on Women Deacons. After that commission was announced in May, 2016, I started receiving invitations to Catholic parishes to speak about the Commission. The permanent diaconate is very popular in the United States. The United States has, I think, more than half of the person deacons in the world, who are often married men.

I found out by visiting these parishes that people didn't know a whole lot about the theology and the history of the diaconate. They weren't familiar with the tradition of women deacons in the Church who, in different places and times, had different responsibilities. But the announcement of the Commission was something that people were really excited by, and they wanted to learn more. So, visiting these parishes was a great opportunity to hear people's hopes and dreams for the Church. I don't know what the status of that Commission is today, it started a year ago and we don't receive reports on their meetings. But I know the Commission continues to meet. This is a

very practical step in a very important part of the Church's life.

Deacons have many responsibilities, but one of them is within liturgy, to assist at the altar, to give homilies on Sundays. The contact for the vast majority of Catholics is the Mass, gathering with the community on Sunday. So the sea of visible presence of women in the mass, serving as permanent deacons with a voice to reflect on the gospel, to proclaim the gospel, to interpret the Scriptures, to break open the Word, I think, is revolutionary, and really affects the Catholic imagination in seeing women in a very visible, liturgical leadership role.

I have hope around the Women Deacon's Commission, even though I don't know where it's going or when a decision will be made.

Professor Tina Beattie: We have a question from Debra: If you had one thing to ask Pope Francis on behalf of women, what would it be?

Mary McAleese: Publish the report on the deaconate. We know that it is either ready or close to ready; possibly even has been ready for some time. We don't really know. Why don't we know? Why weren't we told? Here's when the report is expected, here's when it will be published. Let us have a forum like this, live-fed, where it can be discussed. And then someone like the Pope says, "Here are the follow-up steps you can now expect. Here is the time scale. Here is the strategy. Here are the outcomes." Not reports that die on the vine.

Professor Tina Beattie: Alina has been asked this question; will women make sure that the Vatican II Church survives? I'm aware that most of our panelists are probably so young that they've never known anything BUT the Vatican II Church. But you know what the question means. The Church that was dreamed of in Vatican II, how will women make sure that the Church of Vatican II survives?

Alina Oehler: Yes, I think we should define what is meant by the Church of Vatican II. I think there are many possibilities. But I want to make one point, because I'm interested in the tradition of the Church and I'm also interested in liturgy. And there is a big rise of the old right. That's interesting. There are so many people who are interested in this old Latin Mass thing. I was in several cities in Germany,

France, and Italy, and it really is a big thing. I'm interested in why those young people are interested in this old kind of liturgy. If you talk to them, well, they're telling you, well, the new right, the Vatican II Mass, if you would say so, it's not what we want. It's too political. We want a holy atmosphere. We want to pray. We want the beauty of the Church.

So I think there is this danger that comes from the Vatican II generation, if you can say, to see things very politically and not so spiritual. It's just my point of view. We can discuss this. You can just visit churches where these old Masses from the Virginity of St. Peter, for example, were said, and there are so many young people. It's just interesting. I have no conclusion yet, but I'm just researching it.

Professor Tina Beattie: I've been reflecting on the conversation you and I had an opportunity to have about that, and also, the sort of regret that I think you expressed that so often, that old right goes hand-in-hand with very misogynistic attitudes towards involvement and participation of women.

Mary McAleese: That's right. But it's a phenomenon we have to look into, I think.

Nicole Sotelo: I think for me, one of the most important parts of Vatican II was the universal call to holiness, the fact that not just the clergy, but all God's people are called to participate in the Church. I think we've heard this again from Pope Francis who has called us again for all of us to be missionary disciples. But I think part of that discipleship and missionary focus also needs to be turned inward. How can we all participate, not just outside the Church doors, but inside the Church doors?

So I really believe that to keep that spirit of universal discipleship alive from Vatican II is up to every single one of us in this room, around the world. The call from God is to each of us to step into the people we've been called to be.

We're responsible for carrying forth not just Vatican II, but the gospel that was given to us by Christ.

Professor Tina Beattie: Voices of women, please speak about spiritual abuse. This

question is from Felix. Isn't the denial of women in the priesthood a form of spiritual abuse? Who wants to go there?

Father Luke Hansen: From the gift of the friendships I've had and the women I've listened to who have felt, experienced a call to ordained ministry as deacons, as priests, it would certainly seem so, because for them, that sense of call, which, when I hear them describe their vocation story and I ask them about it, seem so familiar to my own story. What attracts them to ordained ministry is what attracts me: a positive experience of the Church, of priests who I admired when I was younger, priests in my life as a Catholic adult who I was drawn to, who I found inspiration in, who I saw making a difference in people's lives. This is the reality that draws these women to this ministry. Obviously, it puts them in a very complicated, confusing, painful situation to not have the opportunity to even explore that call. It's not an insistence on a right to ordination, which is not a right. It's a call that comes from the community and it's confirmed by the community. I haven't thought of the language of spiritual abuse, but what I've seen is that it's really painful. It's a joy of discovery of how God wants you to be in the world.

I've been able to see some of these women preach and exercise ministry at the women's prison. You see the joy and gifts that they have for it. But it's also so painful, because not only is this basically unrealistic for them at this point to even try to imagine how this vocation could be fulfilled, but they don't feel free to even talk about it in a classroom, at a school of theology, or in other places. So it's a painful reality, from what I've been gifted to hear. And I think a really important point of emphasis is that in the end, it's about the individual person and their dignity and sense of vocation, but it's the right of the community to minister as well, as so many parishes close and merge. And people value priesthood and want priests who are inspiring leaders in their communities who are agents of healing.

It's the right of the community to these ministers. So that becomes a painful, complicated reality for these women.

Professor Tina Beattie: Thank you. It goes back, really, to being able to tell our stories, doesn't it? I'm just editing a collection of writings by Catholic women, and I must say, the section where they tell their stories of



I STAY NOW BECAUSE I CHOOSE. I CHOOSE TO BE ONE OF THE 1,2 BILLION PEOPLE STRETCHED ACROSS FIVE CONTINENTS, PART OF AN INSTITUTION THAT HAS NO EQUAL ON THE PLANET IN TERMS OF ITS OUTREACH TO THE POOR, TO THE DISPOSSESSED, TO THE MARGINALIZED, THE HANDS OF GOD'S WORK IN THE WORLD. NO NGO DOES WHAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DOES THROUGH ORDINARY PEOPLE LIKE THOSE GATHERED HERE.

— Mary McAleese



vocations to priesthood leave me in tears as I read them again and again and again, because there is that reality of vocation and frustration and denial of very great gifts. And in some of these stories I read, I think what wonderful priests these would be. So, hang on and pray on it.

Now, this question. Pope Francis tweeted today "I thank all women who, every day, strive to build more humane and welcoming societies." Pope Francis, you're very welcome, and having read what you said on dialogue, we would like to respond. Elisa, how would you respond, as someone who works very hard to build more humane and welcoming societies?

Elisa Orbananos Hernando: Thank you for that tweet and thank you again for open dialogue, but we need action. That's all I can say. Thank you for your words, but we need deeds.

Professor Tina Beattie: Deeds, yes. We like the tweets, but please. Who else? Mary, do you want to give a quick response?

Mary McAleese: Well, I think it's a rather nice tweet, so why don't you invite us in for the conversation?

Professor Tina Beattie: Anyone else? Well, we'll keep working for a more humane and welcoming society. We women know that you must put your own house in order before you start telling others how to run theirs. So we would have liked a humane welcome this week, wouldn't we?

Mary McAleese: It would have been nice. It might have been Christ-like. But maybe that's asking too much.

Professor Tina Beattie: Yasmine asks, Voice of Faith women, how should parishioners continue where the words of Mary McAleese left off?

Alina Oehler: I'm very happy to be Catholic, because I experience the love and grace of God through that Church and through its sacraments. And my faith in Jesus Christ and reading the Gospel, enjoying the beauty of churches, enjoying the liturgy, it's giving me so much power in my everyday life. I couldn't imagine a life without it. So that's why I'm still happy to be a Catholic.

Father Luke Hansen: Fundamentally, for me, especially when I'm speaking with friends who are not religious at all, the fundamental point is that God is real, Jesus is alive, my life has

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been transformed by His presence. Especially during really challenging times in my life, I've been carried along by a sense of the mercy and love of Jesus and consolation. This is a gift that I want to share with my life. It's why I became a priest. And in the context of everything else we talk about, for me, that is what is most fundamental; receiving that gift and sharing that gift.

Nicole Sotelo: I believe in Jesus, who came to dwell amongst us and teach us to love. I believe in the Holy Spirit, who I believe continues to call us to seek God's kingdom, and not "kingdom," but kin-dom, as I was taught by mujerista theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz. I think particularly on International Women's Day, in part I stay Catholic because of the young women who will come after me. I continue to stay in and work for change because I don't want them to have to struggle as much as so many of us have, simply to be who God has called them to be in the Church they love.

Elisa Orbananos Hernando: I feel loved by God. I'm in love with what I do every day to accompany, to serve, to advocate for refugees is definitely the link in them. And I can do it because I'm a Catholic, a proud Catholic. I guess I just love the Church that made me the person I am today, and I just struggle to be loved in return.

Mary McAleese: My parents chose this faith for me. Like so many of us here, I'm a baptized, cradle Catholic. I stay now because I choose. I choose to be one of the 1.2 billion people stretched across five continents, part of an institution that has no equal on the planet in terms of its outreach to the poor, to the dispossessed, to the marginalized, part of an institution, the hands of God's work in the world. No NGO does what the Catholic Church does through ordinary people like those gathered here.

They're the people who inspire me. It's their work that drives me on and gives me hope for the future. And I stay because I believe that if the power of the voices coming from those frontline troops can work its way up through this dreadfully stylized, imperial hierarchy that is only an historic artifact, not of divine creation, when that falls away, I think we can flood the world with the love of Christ. And that, I think, is what keeps me in the Church.

Professor Tina Beattie: Flood the world with the love of Christ. I think Joana said today, women are like water. So I think this event today has probably built up the flood waters. And to someone who asked me this morning, "Do you have hope?" I said, "It is like the incoming tide." She asked, "Do you think this event will make a difference?" You know, I live in a house boat and I watch the tide come in every day. There isn't a moment at which you can say, "It turned." But suddenly you know it has turned. And every drop of water that was part of that turning counts.

So, today, I really do believe that we are the turning tide. And as Kamut once learned, don't stand on the shore and say, "Go back," because we're going to keep coming in and coming in and coming in, and there's nothing that can stop the incoming tide. So, flood the world with love. And I think that's a nice note to end on.

THANK YOU.





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