



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Office for the Participation of Women

CATHOLIC MISSION CONFERENCE: ONE HEART, MANY VOICES

A multi sector dialogue and celebration

<http://mohmv.com.au/index.html>

WORKSHOP SESSION 1: MONDAY 29TH APRIL 2.00 – 3.15PM

Women, Mission and Leadership

INPUT NOTES

Outline

20 min input

20 mins small group discussion with questions (7 groups of 5)

20 mins whole group feedback

Number of participants: 35

WOMEN, MISSION AND LEADERSHIP

Overview

In September 2000 the Catholic Bishops of Australia launched the Social Justice Statement which responds to the Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia, *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* (1999). Proposal #2 of the Bishops' Social Justice Statement 2000 states that "a better balance of men and women be appointed to leadership roles in the Catholic Church".

This workshop seeks to address the "elephant in the room" - how the full participation of women in leadership could enable the Church to better fulfil its mission to bring about the reign of God.

INPUT

INTRO (5 mins)

Purpose of this conference *Mission: One heart, many voices* is to "explore the complexity and issues surrounding leadership, formation, theology and the practice of mission". The issues around women, mission and leadership are complex indeed. But we need to remember that our vision of mission should always be scriptural. So a good place to start is by looking at the Gospels and how Jesus treated women. This is what feminist theologians do and must do.

"Feminism is the radical notion that women are people" Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza

Do you believe that women and girls deserve the same educational opportunities as boys and men?



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Do you believe that women should have the right to vote? (became possible in my grandmother's life-time)

Do you believe women deserve equal pay for equal work? (became possible in my life time)

Do you believe women deserve a place in public life (as politicians and leaders)?

We are talking about basic human rights. We are talking about justice. We are talking about opportunity and when it comes to leadership we are talking about good governance, corporate performance (transparency and accountability) and the ethical and socially responsible use of power.

This conference *Mission: One heart, many voices* is "for those who are inspired to strive creatively for justice, truth, peace, freedom, reconciliation and the Reign of God". So I think if we dialogue about women and the Church we do need to be creative about how we do this (cf February plenary German bishops conference).

Anthony – "Hope you are going to tell the conference that the mission for women is to help the Church deepen its prayerful/spiritual/contemplative dimension!" through scripture especially the studying the way Jesus treated women in the Gospel of Luke

The Office, together with the Council for Australian Catholic Women, exists at the "national level to ensure that the dignity of women is honoured and their gifts are given space to flourish for the sake of the Church's life and mission" (ACBC Social Justice Statement 2000).

Some background history about the OPW: In 1996 the ACBC commissioned a report into women's participation in the Church in Australia. This took 4 years of surveys and public hearings, for the material to be collated and the recommendations to be written. In 1999 it was published as *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*. In 2000 the bishops published a Social Justice Sunday Statement *Woman and Man: The Bishops Respond* (9 Decisions and 31 Proposals). One of the recommendations was that a Commission for Australian Catholic Women be established within the structure of the ACBC. This was set up in 2001. The inaugural officer was Therese Vassarotti who was employed full-time with a full-time administrative support staff member (Mary Moran). In 2006 there was a re-structure of the ACBC and the Commission for Australian Catholic Women became the Council for Australian Catholic Women – an advisory council to the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry. Around the time of this re-structure Therese and Mary left the ACBC and an Office for the Participation



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of Women was established and new Director appointed, Kimberly Davis. At the end of 2011 I was appointed as the third EO to this role and took up my position at the beginning of 2012. To read the mandates to the OPW and CACW I would refer you to the OPW web-site www.opw.catholic.org.au

MISSION (5 mins)

“The Church doesn’t have a mission. The mission has a Church.”

“What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart...” Pope Benedict XVI

What is our mission? To help bring about the reign of God. What is the reign of God? Go to the gospels. The Lord’s prayer “on Earth as it is in Heaven”. Remember Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It is within each and every one of us. Matthew “the first shall be last and last shall be first” “many are called but few are chosen” Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 18) a little child (small, weak, vulnerable, no human rights, not even counted in the census of Feeding of the 5000). Entering into the reign of God is not an easy path to follow. It is like trying to squeeze a camel through the eye of a needle we are told in the gospels. As we were reminded recently by Pope Francis we must become a Church of and for the poor (cf Luke’s gospel). John’s gospel tells us God is love. Ultimately the reign of God is about love – God’s unconditional love for us is what gives us the energy and nourishment to serve others unconditionally. This is the reign of God. God is love. If we abide in God, we will always abide in love.

WOMEN (5 mins)

Women make up 61% of parishioners in Australia. 90% of pastoral associates are women. Half of this number are religious sisters. In Catholic education 70% of staff are women and 45% of principals. In Catholic Health stats are comparable if not higher. The majority of Directors of Mission are women. Many are lay women. In Catholic Social Welfare Services it is as high as 90% in some dioceses such as my own. America Magazine (US Jesuit publication) a report came out last year that for the first time in the history of the Church young women are now less likely to sign up for formal religion than men. There are fewer women joining religious life than men. Pope Francis is making some positive moves around women. In Holy Week he washed the feet of women and mentioned them in 3 homilies. There are also some interesting developments coming out of the German Bishops’ Conference. Cf Tablet article and Walter Kasper quote:

The Tablet - Latest News Bishops seek greater role for women 28 February 2013

The German bishops last week devoted a day of their three-day plenary to the question of how they can promote the role of women in the Church.



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Participants in the discussion concluded it was imperative to boost the role of women, especially in the Church's decision-making bodies.

Cardinal Karl Lehmann of Mainz called for a "convincing job profile for women that also requires a sacramental blessing and a liturgical ceremony for a binding commitment".

The former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper, suggested creating a new diaconal office for women.

Women could be officially appointed to pastoral, caritative, catechetical and certain liturgical services at a special "Benediction", as abbesses used to be, he said and could then participate in synods, pastoral councils and commissions.

He said such changes "would do the Roman curia good".

Caritative = charitable in nature

Walter Kasper (German cardinal and theologian) "Can't today's Church do something similar to what it did back in the 3rd and 4th centuries when it created a sort of *sui generis* ministry with female deacons to baptise adult women? Given today's challenges, couldn't it establish a ministry for women (not the diaconate) but a body with an independent profile, as it did in the past?" Giacomo Galeazzi (15th April 2013) NCR Online

Sui generis = of its own kind, unique in its characteristics

LEADERSHIP (5mins)

When we talk about leadership in the context of mission we need to be ever mindful that we are talking about Christian leadership and the model for Christian leadership should always be Christ himself. I'd refer you to the book *Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient wisdom for visionary leadership* by Laurie Beth Jones. The best reference point for how to be a Christ-like leader is the gospels. Pedro Arrupe prayer "Teach me your way O Lord". We need to lead by example. Francis of Assisi "preach the gospels and if you have to use words". We do need to become a more biblical Church. We should aim to read the gospels everyday (cf Anthony's quote above)

Call to action: pray with scripture. Evangelizo app

Women and Leadership – increasing women's participation in Church governance structures will improve its leadership. We know that when we increase gender diversity on boards corporate performance improves. Areas such as transparency, accountability, clarity of mission and vision improve. Financial performance improves



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and corruption and cultures of abuse decrease. Interestingly the greater diversity that exists in boards, the greater unity there is around decision making processes. Google “gender diversity”

Gender agenda: Unlocking the power of diversity in the boardroom (InSync surveys 2010) Executive summary

Organisations with gender diverse boards:

- Have a higher level of organisational effectiveness and financial performance than more male dominated boards
- Add more organisational value through the quality of their decision making
- Have more effective chairs with greater personal integrity and more effective leadership style and decision making process
- Directors who act with greater integrity
- Are more vigilant about connection between remuneration packages and performance
- Require better documentation of roles and responsibilities
- Gender diverse boards show greater evidence of a diversity of thought and perspective and at the same time, greater unity and collegiality
- Fosters an atmosphere of trust, respect and confidence among members



INTRO to small group work

“The fundamental barrier (to women’s participation in the Catholic Church in Australia) concerned traditions and attitudes which were seen to be inconsistent with the person and message of Jesus Christ and especially his relationship with women. The major suggestions to increase women’s participation were the involvement of women in decision-making at all levels, a re-examination of the nature of ministry with exploration of the possibility of more inclusive roles for men and women, and reform of beliefs and associated practices that do not promote the equality of men and women.”

Executive summary, MacDonald et al. (1999) *Woman and Man One in Christ Jesus*, Report of the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia, Harper Collins: Sydney

When the bishops and the authors of the report were thinking about what they really wanted to know about women and the Church in Australia they came up with 4 questions. The report was structured around these questions:

1. What are the ways in which women participate in the Catholic Church in Australia?
2. What assistance and support are currently offered to women to participate in the Church?
3. What are the barriers to women's participation in the Church?
4. What are some ways in which women's participation in the Church can be increased?