

Speaking Out: the Role of OCW

This morning we were priveleged to hear four women speaking bravely and openly about their sense of vocation to the priesthood in the catholic church - a vocation that the hierarchy says can't exist because God forbids it.

In spite of this stance, and the firm belief of the vatican that the church does not have the power to ordain women, the group Ordination of Catholic Women, along with many such groups around the world, continues to exists.

Our stated aims are five-fold. They are:

- 1) to advocate the admission of women to the ordained ministries of the catholic church;
- 2) to encourage women to hear and respond to the call of God to ordained ministries;
- 3) to express women's perspectives in theology and celebrate their different and diverse spiritual gifts;
- 4) to create of the church a discipleship of equals;
- 5) to work with appropriate national and international groups towards these ends.

Today I want to consider our purpose and our plans in the light of the firm and frequently repeated conviction of the Vatican that we are wrong. I want to consider why I (and I can only speak for me) continue to claim membership of the church at the same time as I speak out against declared church policy on the question of the ordination of women.

For many of us, remaining in the church is a constant struggle; a decision made anew, day after day, with the knowledge that one day, it may all become too much. Mary Grey has described this struggle as a Dark Night of the soul, as real and as terrible and as holy as anything John of the Cross described. In her book Redeeming the Dream she writes:

'most people assume women are angry and depressed because they are not allowed to be ordained priests. But the Dark Night comprehends a much deeper level of alienation and despair. It is darkness born of a lack of nourishment by the liturgy, prayer-life and doctrine of the christian church. It is the pain of the distorted symbols and lifeless rituals, which exclude the humanity of women; it is the making of the Christ-mystery into something un-related to human living and the controlling of this by a class of clerical elite...; it is having no form of prayer which connects with one's experience, having the life of the Spirit choked back and still-born ...The total impasse of the night, the experience of being made mute and inarticulate - not in the silence of loving contemplation, but because the language sought for has not been brought to birth - descends with shocking immediacy.'

It is this Night we are living in; OCW is only one response to this night. So, why stay, and why OCW?

I can only say for me, that I believe that I am part of the church; I believe in the gospel vision not as the spiritual

2

well-being of an individual soul, but rather as the life of a community animated by God's Spirit. Members of this community have a right - nay, rather, have an obligation - to speak out. So, to stay silent would be to betray myself and to betray the gospel.

While as members of OCW it is clear that we intend to speak out for the ordination of women, our aims indicate that we do not believe that the ordination of women, by itself, is enough; that simply ordaining women into the church structured as it is at present is sufficient to bring about a truly christian community. The ordination of women must be accompanied by a reformation of the church into a discipleship of equals.

There are those who argue that this conversion must come first; that only when the church is one of equality is it appropriate for women to be part of its ministry. Yet I cannot sit back and wait. There is undoubtedly a tension between the goals of trying to reform the church into a place which is liberating for women and working for the ordination of women. But I think that the two should not be seen to be in opposition. We need, I believe, to work at both tasks to achieve a church which is a healthy place for women - and men.

Indeed, the ordination question may not be the central question; it could, on its own, simply mean that a few women joined the clerical elite; but the blanket refusal of the official church to consider the question clarifies for me the image of women which the Official Church holds - and it is a image which I believe must be contended. The ordination of women question has managed to focus sharply the androcentricity and patriarchal nature of the official church. This, I believe, is why it is so important. The response which it brings forth from the Vatican is a indication of the difference visions of church which we have and why so many of us live in this Dark Night.

There are two major issues raised by Vatican statements on women and ordination. In the first place, the Vatican statements against the ordination are not convincing. Our pamphlet to be launched on its stormy voyage this afternoon deals with this. Scripture scholars have said again and again that the question of the ordination of women cannot be decided by scriptural analysis, yet simplistic statements to this end continue to be used. The gospel texts do not state that Jesus ordained 12 men to be the first priests and to ordain men as their successors. Statements which say this are interpretations of the text, subject to all the cultural, historical conditioning of any reading of a text. Scripture scholars hold, in the main, that the texts do not allow the interpretations that they are given by those who use them to forbid the ordination of women.

The second argument, that of Tradition (with capital T), claims that the church has always held that only men can be ordained and therefore, only men can be ordained. This argument is also unconvincing. There are too many texts, inscriptions etc that refer to the leadership of women. It also, it seems to me,

begs the questions of historical influences and the development of doctrine.

The backing up of these arguments by the discussion of the priest as the icon of christ and therefore necessarily male is also a fairly new and wobbly argument. We do not agree with it. Again, we have discussed this in the pamphlet.

And finally, and for me most importantly, we believe that the full ministry of the church in the 20th century requires a full ministry of women and men - and this, regardless of what happened or did not happen in previous centuries. Doctrines develop.

So the arguments used by the Vatican need to be challenged. I find it amazing and insulting, that the prohibition is simply repeated and repeated without any attempt being made to address the serious questions that scripture scholars and theologians have raised. I find the silence of our bishops on this issue staggering.

The second issue for me is that the papal statements contain pronouncements about women and the 'nature' of women that need challenging. The prohibition on ordination is buoyed up by the pope's ideas about the nature of women. Papal statements about women are arriving almost daily. But as Poor Clare sister Frances Teresa recently (Tablet August 5) noted, 'While it is heartening to see Pope John Paul II, who is manifestly a man on an inner journey, doing his best to make sense of us, yet he still sees women as there to help men....'

My first problem with the recent letter of the pope to all women is the way he addresses us. He calls us his sisters. But does he act as a brother? Has he earned the right to call me his sister? Sisters and brothers listen to one another. Throughout his rule, this pope has consistently refused to listen to any woman who challenged him; he thanks women for their 'insights' but refuses to listen to any feminist women who challenge tradition teaching:

* In 1979, Sister Theresa Kane, as President of Leadership Conference of women Religious of USA, addressed the pope on his US visit, in a short 600 word speech which included the now famous words:

'I urge you, Your Holiness, to be open to and to respond to the voices of women coming from this country whose desire is for serving in and through the church as fully participating members'.

A brief, careful statement, with no 'O' word, no 'P' word - no mention actually of ordination or priesthood, but enough for her to be treated as a non-person by churchmen in both the US and the Vatican.

* In May 1984 during the visit of JP II to the Netherlands, Professor Catharine Halkes, the leading feminist RC scholar in Europe, was forbidden to address the pontiff.

* In 1992, Teresa Berger was refused permission by the Vatican to teach at the Catholic University of Fribourg even though the Swiss bishops had approved her appointment.

* In 1994 the Vatican Congregation of Catholic Education blocked the appointment of Teresa Berger as professor of liturgy at Bochum University by refusing licence to teach, so she cannot take up her post. No reasons for the ban given (Tablet 23 July 94 936).

* In 1994, the Vatican barred Rosemary Ruether from giving a lecture at Gregorian University in Rome.

* In 1995, Sr Carmel McEnroy RSM, a tenured member of staff, was summarily dismissed without due process from the St Meinrad Benedictine Seminary because she, along with hundreds of others, signed an advertisement that appeared in the National Catholic Reporter Nov 4 1994 questioning Pope John Paul's ban on women's ordination. The advertisement did not call for women's ordination but simply for discussion of the issues leading to the papal ban.

* In 1995, Brazilian feminist professor of philosophy and theology Sr Ivone Gebera, said by some to be Latin America's leading feminist theologian, has been asked by Rome to be theologically silent for two years (Tablet July 1 1995). She is to go to Europe to study traditional European theology.

And of course, while these individual, articulate, outspoken women are silenced, all women are ignored and treated as non-persons by the excluding language of the catechism and the prohibition of the use of the inclusive New Revised Standard Version of the Bible in the lectionary. We are excluded and our bishops do not seem to care.

So the first problem I have with the recent statements of the Pope on women is that they are not part of a dialogue; however gently spoken, they are more like a harangue. The second problem I have is with their dualistic thinking.

The pope is convinced that women and men are created by God as two different forms of human being, which while recognised at last as equal, are equal, he claims, but complementary.

Efforts to stress the differences between women and men arise whenever social theories stress equality. [Schussler Fiorenza (1985)] Classics scholar Marilyn Arthur has pointed out that emphasis on the difference in male and female nature is not explicit in writings from the Greek aristocratic period, but emerges with the introduction of Athenian democracy when State political and legal structures were excluding freeborn women from citizenship.

Much closer to our own time, the 18th century was a time of powerful political moves for democracy and equality [of all men]. Again we find the differences between women and men being stressed, with assertions as to their complementarity. This time it was not Greek categories but new scientific methods which are used, as the comparative anatomy of men and women became a research project for the medical fraternity. This was undoubtedly partly out of concern for women's health, but the real drive for the search for sex differences was, Londa Schiebinger argues, political. It was used by enlightenment thinkers to reconcile the subordination of women with the axiom that all men are by nature equal. Exclusion of

women from the polis was possible for them if they could establish natural differences in male and female natures. The theory of sexual complementarity fitted neatly into the requirements. Analysis of male and female skeletons using the new scientific methods of measurement provided the necessary data.

Sexual differences were weighed and measured as accurately as possible. Anatomists attempted to represent nature with painstaking precision; but at the same time, and seeing no conflict in the two aims, they also intended to represent the body in what they saw as its most beautiful and universal forms. So the illustrations they drew of the male and female skeletons served to produce and reproduce contemporary ideals of masculinity and femininity. The most famous male skeleton became that drawn by Albinus in 1734. He proclaimed that in selecting his male skeleton he:

"made choice of one that might discover signs both of strength and agility: the whole of it elegant and at the same time not too delicate; so as neither to show a juvenile or feminine roundness and slenderness, nor on the contrary an unpolished roughness and clumsiness". (LS 201).

A right regular gentleman.

Albinus lamented the lack of a comparable female skeleton. In 1759 one appeared which captured the imagination of medicos for more than 50 years. As Londa Schiebinger writes, it:

'exaggerated almost to the point of caricature those parts of the body emerging as sites of political debate: the skull as mark of intelligence, the pelvis as measure of womanliness'.

Marie Thiroux d'Arconville incorrectly drew the female skull as smaller in proportion to the body than the male's, and made the pelvis appear wide by exaggerating the narrowness of the ribs. She may have used a skeleton distorted by corset. [limiting mobility, like being on a pedestal].

In 1796, while Soemmerring wanted to correct these exaggerations, yet he aimed to demonstrate his 'ideal' woman:

"above all" he wrote "I was anxious to obtain the body of a woman remarkable not only for her youth and aptitude for procreation, but also for the beauty and harmony of limbs" To gain such 'perfection' he actually used the head of one skeleton and the body of another.

In *The Anatomy of the Bones of the Human Body*, published in 1829, Barclay illustrated the male skeleton by using the Albinus male and lined it up with the skeleton of a horse to emphasise male strength and agility; and chose the Thiroux d'Arconville rendition of the female with its narrow and confining ribs, and apparently large pelvis. This female skeleton was compared with that of an ostrich, with large pelvis and long willowy neck and small head. Woman as breeder. Woman as mother.

Such idealized skeletons were accepted as proof that women's bodies were fundamentally different from men's. Powerfully

influential thinkers such as Rousseau argued from this that such differences prescribed vastly different roles for men and women in society. Rousseau used medical evidence for difference to support the theory that sexual differences permeated the entire life of the woman: "the destiny of woman is to have children and to nourish them". Rousseau and fellow complementarians did not rank women, like Aristotle, as man manque; instead 'each in fulfilling "nature's ends according to its own particular purpose" found its own distinctive perfection.' ls 224. John Gregory argued that woman's equality depended on her retaining and cultivating her distinct character. Women and men had different roles and different spheres of moral competence.

Complementarity kept women out of competition with men in public sphere and preserved the family. Rousseau thus framed a new brand of complementarity for the 18th century which provided, as Schiebinger notes, 'a solution to the two threats women posed to middle-class men: the threat of traditional power and privilege wielded by aristocratic women, and the new demands for equality coming from women of the third estate.' [parallels today]

As a final thought on the whole question of differences and complementarity, we might note that biologists of the late twentieth century, with access to molecular genetic analysis, question the whole binary either/or categories of male and female. Such absolute categories, Fausto-Sterling notes [in Myths of Gender], fail when genetic 'abnormalities' or defects are considered. The more I consider the variety of human beings, the more I wonder at the absolute categories we set up and the use of these categories, such as male and female to decide who can and who can't be ordained into the ministry of the catholic church.

The Priesthood and women:

For what is this priesthood that we cannot join? The last thirty or more years have seen a series of analyses of the nature of ministry and priesthood in the catholic church. Two separate terms are important for us, priesthood and clergy, and we need to consider both.

First the priesthood. Many of you will know much more than I do about this. In ancient religions, the priests are the ministers of worship, and guardians of sacred traditions who speak for the divine. In Israel, the sacrificial role was paramount. The New Testament documents the variety of the ministries of the growing christian communities. No priests. But plenty of evidence for the leadership of women as well as that of men.

By the second century we begin to see a reduction in this variety; the priesthood seems to have evolved from the early office of presbyter, but we cannot be sure how or where or what its functions were. There is no evidence that it was related to the celebration of the eucharist, rather to helping the

bishop, who was the first to be called by the cultic term priest, early in the third century, as the church came to recognise the sacrificial dimensions of its eucharist. And between the second and the fifth centuries, ministry was reduced from the early diversity to the uniformity of the three orders of deacon, priest and bishop. By the middle ages, entry to ministry was by ordination, and only a validly ordained priest could celebrate the eucharist. Ordination gave the priest sacred power. As Thomas Aquinas wrote:

'Now the power of orders is established for the dispensation of the sacraments...[and] is principally ordered to consecrating the body of Christ and dispensing it to the faithful, and to cleansing the faithful from their sins.'

The clergy:

During this first millennium, the ordained ministers were not only becoming called priests, they were forming the clergy.

Edmund Campion has traced this for us in his article in Priesthood: The Hard Question (from Sydney). I shall reduce, and no doubt betray, his arguments as I simplify them. There is a point I want to reach. As he has explained, the word 'clergy' or 'chosen' was found to be a useful word for Clement to use to describe the group chosen from among the christian people to lead the liturgy in the Corinthian church. But with the change from the early diverse ministry to the three orders comes a growing-apartness of these ministers from the people; ie a growing clericalization. This gathered momentum in the fourth century, with the incorporation of christianity into the Roman Empire when the clergy were transformed into:

'a type of civil service with political and economic priveleges of rank and status, with exemption from military service, from subjection to civil courts, and from taxation.'

[note exemption still to EEO legislation]. A lay/cleric distinction appears, patterned, Schillebeeckx argues, on the segregation of social classes in Roman empire, with clergy part of the higher class, faithful at the bottom, and a hierarchical structure in place.

Then in the eleventh century, with the renewal of Roman Law, the power of leadership, in state and in church, was detached from the concept of territoriality. Ordination was not longer for a particular community, and ordained ministry became a state of life, the clerical state. The emphasis was on the "sacred power" which the members of the clergy were said to possess; the priest was set apart from others and given a unique authority; becomes to be seen as a sacred person. And this status was reinforced by legal statute; the Christian community came to be seen primarily in terms of the division into cleric and lay. Perhaps most seriously for our purposes, under the influence of Neoplatonism, this led to a distinction between the sacred and the secular, with the sacred the preserve of the clergy and the secular or profane the world of the laity.

At the beginning, all baptised were called the saints. Now, there is a division into the ordained/sacred and unordained/profane. What we have is the dualism of sacred and secular or sacred and profane.

Evidence, I believe, supports the view that those who reject the possibility of the ordination of women hold to this sacred view of the priest. I suggest, therefore, that behind the rhetoric of scriptural analyses and historical claims lies an inability to accept women into the sacred sphere. In the long/held division of sacred and profane, as in all these dualisms from platonic times, the man has always been on the high side, here as sacred, the woman on the low side here as profane.

The power of this divide and the impact it has on women's lives and on the prohibition of ordination did not come home to me until one day when, on sabbatical in 1984 at the University of Sussex I was attending mass at a parish church in Brighton.

The local church in Brighton in 1984 was like something out of the 50s, full of a theology I didn't know was still being taught: hellfire and damnation at regular intervals. The critical moment came one day at Mass when, just before communion, two little altar boys came down and closed the gates of the altar rails. The sacred within the gates, the profane without. And inside those gates I did not belong. Rage exploded within me. Excluded, Impure...female...laity... No doubt many moments of feeling excluded or rejected were crystallized for me in that one moment, but I would never be the same. I was overwhelmed by the power of the sacred/profane split - and the extent to which it can come to appear as right and just. Yet it keeps women on the side of the profane.

If the sacred/profane split in patriarchal society keeps women on the side of the profane, how do we repair this? It will not be repaired by the ordination of a few women who are then placed on the side of the sacred. One way proposed has been the declaration of the woman as divine; another has been the sacralization of women and their lives by creating rituals which celebrate and name as sacred the times and occasions of women; a problem is that, as Erickson argues, this moves the sacred/profane boundary without removing it.

As long as human beings and human space and time are divided into sacred and not-sacred (whether that not-sacred is called secular or profane) we are setting up categories which are those of superordination and subordination. Yet, as Christians, we are the people for whom the veil of the temple has split from top to bottom; the division between sacred space and profane space has been obliterated.

And we are the people whose central celebration is a thanksgiving to God, in which the central point is not the sanctification of bread and wine, not the divinization of bread and wine, but the transformation of all of us, the divinization of the community. If we truly believe this, then surely we cannot hold to separate categories of sacred and profane for

clergy and laity. We cannot hold that some people are sacred and some are not.

Priesthood as ministerial service of leadership:

Vatican II finally challenged this idea of priesthood as a sacred, clerical caste, and reclaimed the Priesthood of the faithful. This has led to considerable thought being given to the meaning of the ordained priestly ministry. Vat II has also named the ordained minister as not only priest but as pastor and prophet, and many analyses have built on this. Others have tried a more complex division. I would suggest that the two main ideas for priesthood being discussed at present are the priest as sacred and the priest as ordained minister, and the move is towards the idea of ordination for ministerial leadership. This sees the priest rather as member of the community, representing the community, selected from the community, belonging to the community; the Priest in persona ecclesiae.

This emphasis on the priesthood as a ministry of service rather than one of power and authority, considers the pastoral needs of a community to which a person is called by the Spirit to lead; it is seen as a leadership focused on fostering and coordinating the gifts and talents of others. Ordained ministers are seen as part of the community which they serve, not as part of a separate, sacred caste. They preside at the community's liturgy because they lead their communities and are responsible to the whole church for that leadership, not because they have sacred power denied to the rest of the community.

While calls for an emphasis on ministerial leadership have sometimes been accompanied by calls for a de-clericization of the church, many preaching servant ministry see it as existing in the present hierarchal, clerical structure of bishop, priest and deacon, with these ordained ministers overseeing the often voluntary, or poorly paid non-ordained ministry of women and married men. The ordained speak of themselves as servants; but they are still in charge.

Such servant ministry may not be any better for women than ministry of the ordained sacred priest. As Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza has pointed out, when servant ministry is articulated as a diversification of the present ministry, and new ministries are unordained and complementary to the traditional hierarchal ministries of bishop, priest and deacon, this does not challenge the hierarchal structures and the class division between clerical and lay. It exhorts those in power to serve those they rule, while relegating women's ministry to subservient tasks with no power of decision making and little or no pay. As she says, it

'rhetorically claims service and servanthood for those who have patriarchal-hierarchal status and exercise spiritual power and control'.

Despite the positive intentions of those developing a "servant ecclesiology", such theology cannot be liberating to those

trapped in poverty and servitude which they do not choose; the language of ordained ministry as servant leadership heaps insults on their heads. People who are powerless in society or church are not able to choose servanthood freely.

If neither the priest as sacred cleric nor the priest as servant minister is liberating for women - and other non-persons - what do we do?

The work of OCW

If our aim, in OCW, is the incorporation of women into a non-hierarchical ministry of women and men, creating a church in which all are equal, we have to confront the androcentric dualisms which are used to hold us in subordination.

By our baptism we are anointed into the priesthood of all the faithful, as priests, prophets and pastors. At this time, what we are above all being called to live, I believe, is as prophets. We have to be prophets to awake the church to its present limitations which prevent it from bringing Christ to the world. We have to work with all those who go ahead and prepare the way to wholeness.

As Brueggemann wrote nearly twenty years ago:

'The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.'

Prophets have both to criticize the dominant consciousness and energize the community, and to do this they must see 'clearly the integral connection between speech and hope! It is only speech that makes hope possible, and when the royal consciousness of technology stops serious speech it precludes hope.' So if we are to give prophetic witness to a future church as discipleship of equals, we shall have to speak boldly today. We shall have to voice the pain and the grief of the Dark Night, and also the hope for the future; we shall have to articulate the anguish, the numbness and the despair of the present, as well as the hope and joy of the future.

The present Vatican prohibitions on discussing the question of the ordination of women should not be allowed to stop us from proclaiming our truth. The words must be spoken. Brueggemann suggested that powerful regimes try 'to stop the language of newness' and stopping such language diminishes our humanness. Inclusive language, the language of women as priests, the language of God as woman, all these for twentieth century Christians are new language. And we are seeing the effort being made to block them.

We in OCW call for the ordination of women. We do this knowing that in doing it we are speaking a new language, proclaiming women as images of God and images of Christ. We do it because we believe that the ordination of women would be a powerful iconoclastic act, shattering not only the image of the all-male priesthood but, more importantly, the image of the all-male

god. We are challenging those androcentric dualisms supporting the present structures of the institutional church, the dualisms clergy/laity, of sacred/profane, of male/female. The ordination of women question seems to challenge them all but it also requires us to speak out when silence is demanded.

I have two answers two answers to these demands. One comes from Cardinal Newman, his celebrated remark in his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk:

Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing), I shall drink, - to the Pope, if you please, - still to conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.'

The second comes from Joan Chittister. After 2000 years of the official church 'teaching errors on matters as global and major as official anti-Semitism, usury, the Inquisition, slavery, the nature of the universe, and meat on Fridays', it is hard to believe that our concern for the full humanity of all people can be seen as an error of faith. I have to trust conscience and the Holy Spirit.

Yet if we are to speak out at such a time, then we have to be of great courage. This is no time for modelling ourselves on Nicodemus, coming by night, being disciples in secret; it is no time, as Chittister writes, for the silent, the stealthy, the safe. It is the time for a Hannah speaking boldly and publically in the Temple; the time for an Esther, determined to go to the king and speak - 'even if it kills me'; the time for the Syro-Phoenician woman, refusing to be silenced by the male disciples protecting (as they thought) Jesus from this troublesome woman. 'But', she said; 'But', we have to keep saying.

And if we cannot speak in churches and in the catholic press, then we must speak in public, in so-called secular press. Whenever the opportunity arises, letters to the editor, notes for the newspaper; working with local OCW coordinators; bringing their attention to newspaper/radio/TV articles they may not have seen; supporting each other's efforts - so that if one has a letter published, then others use that opportunity to write a second, supporting letter. All those who can being prepared to be publically associated with the issue. I realize that some cannot do this; their work security requires them to be quiet and careful - and we must respect this. All the more, therefore, must those who do not have incomes at risk take the step of speaking out.

And not just words; prophetic action means acting with courage, like the women anointing Jesus before his death, going into the house where he was surrounded by those trying to drive her away, a political action of anointing him as king; like the woman who spoke with Jesus at the well and then proclaimed him to the whole village. And so we have to stand in the streets, stand outside our churches when men are being ordained, stand outside when only male priests are celebrating their priesthood, stand up in spite of the insults that will be levelled, in spite of the hurt that will ensure.

2. Second we need to acclaim and celebrate the women who are already deacons and priests among us, even while they await their public ordination. We need to celebrate them, and celebrate with them. I do not believe that the Holy Spirit is restrained by official actions of the official church. The new church is breaking out around us. As Leonardo Boff has written:

'The new church, as in all renewal movements, first appears on the periphery. Given the power structure at the center, the periphery is the only place where true creativity and freedom is possible.'

Around the edges of the church, marginal people, resident aliens, are creating new life. The Vatican may prohibit women from celebrating eucharist in official church liturgies, but, as many of us have experienced, women gather in small circles to break bread together in memory of Jesus. And in many countries with few ordained priests, women are leading whole communities in liturgical thanksgiving. After struggling with such celebrations with her community in the Andes, Josephite sister Irene McCormack wrote:

'I've given up trying to use the terms 'paraliturgy' or 'liturgy of the word' or any of the 'excuses' the official church uses to deny collaborative ministry its rightful place with women and married lay people. I used to try to do the right thing and correct people when they came asking us to celebrate their 'Misas'. I've become convinced that they're closer to the truth and were 'freeing' me to exercise Eucharistic ministry amongst them.'

And in describing such a liturgy, she added:

'as we in our little christian communities, high up in the Andes, gather in memory of Jesus, there is no power or authority on earth that can convince me that Jesus is not personally present.'

We have our priests, we have our deacons; we must not let their ministry in the present hierarchical church be minimalised.

But we also do not, I believe, want to see our ordained ministries limited to a hierarchical system of bishop, priest and deacon. I want to make it clear at this point that any views I have today about future ministries are not to be construed as official OCW theories of ordination, or priesthood. I think it is important that there not be a 'politically correct' OCW theology or theory of ordination or priesthood: we are a group of women and men campaigning for ordination of women in the catholic church and stating that we wish this ordination to be into a renewed priestly ministry - but nowhere do we define any of these terms. We must not, I believe, be restrictive; we must not say 'you can join OCW if you have this particular theory of priesthood, or if ordination has this particular meaning for you'.

But for me, today, I hope to see the time when issues of power and control lose their sway, when we recognise, to quote Irene McCormack again in delightfully Australian idiom, that:

'the preoccupation of our church leaders with power and control over who can celebrate the Eucharist, who can and who can't receive the Eucharist, is right up the creek.'
 I long for christian ministries to be open to women and to men, to single, married, celibate, divorced; to people chosen from their communities for leadership regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, or class; ordained for life or for limited periods; for universal ministry or for a small community; not just bishops, priests or deacons, but prophets, apostles, teachers, healers, workers of miracles, administrators, helpers. I long for a church which creates and celebrates whatever form of ministry liberates the whole community and joins them together as a true discipleship of equals to work for the empowering reign of Sophia-God in our world.

? be present as resident aliens, as esf suggests.

Boff: Church: Charism and Power p62.

72 'women are traditionally meant to rock cradles, not boats'.

ref ESF in Concilium 198 (1988) p85 {the concilium is called Diakonia: Church for tohers ed N Greinacher and N Mette} and esf's paper is Waiting at Table: a critical feminist theological reflection on Diakonia'.

Chittister, Joan Winds of Change Women challenge the church Sheed and Ward Kansas City 1986

Gleeson, Gerald P ed Priesthood the hard Questions EJ Dwyer Sydney 1993

Donovan, Daniel What are they saying about the ministerial priesthood Paulist Press New York 1992

Rausch, Thomas P sj Priesthood today: an appraisal Paulist Press New York 1992

St Pierre, Simone M The Struggle to Serve McFarland & Co Jefferson Nth Carolina 1994

Grey, Mary Redeeming the Dream SPCK London 1989

(ESF in Breaking the Silence - Becoming visible 5 in Women - invisible in theology and church ed esf and mary collins Concilium 182 (6/1985) T&T Clark /Edinburgh 3-16.)

Brueggemann The prophetic imagination fortress Press
philadelphia 1978

Joy, Morny Equality or Divinity A False Dichotomy? JFSR 6
9-24 1990