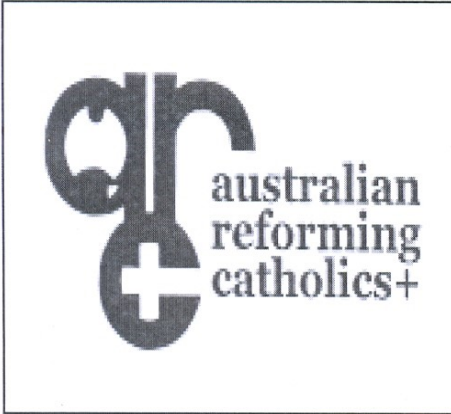


arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

March 2022

Issue No. 84



The clergy must learn synodality from the laity

Pope Francis' call for a synodal Church is arguably the most radical appeal by a pope since the Second Vatican Council. His invitation to the whole Church, laity and clergy, to walk together and listen to one another is new and exciting. But will it come to fruition?

The first point that needs to be made is that synodality is not a process. It may involve a process, but the process is not synodality. Synodality is an attitude, a mind-set. It is the way we relate to people, the way we deal with issues, the way we tackle problems.

Unfortunately, the clergy do not have a 'synodal' mind-set. Walking together and listening are not things that come naturally to them. Their seminary training taught them that they were special, ontologically changed, and set apart from others. Then, as priests in parishes, and bishops in dioceses, they were (and still are) a law unto themselves, with very little accountability.

In contrast, the notions of walking together and listening are not foreign to the laity at all. It is part of their normal experience of life. They might not use the word 'synodality', but they live it.

We only have to look at husbands and wives working together to sustain and enrich their relationship, listening to each other, respecting differences, compromising. That's synodality.

And parents dealing with their children's various, and often complicated, issues in a sensitive and respectful way. That's synodality.

In the workplace too, a collegial mentality is common. Workers are seen as team members, with shared responsibilities. That's synodality.

Even at the broader institutional level, the views of clients and customers are valued and their opinions are sought. That's synodality.

In fact, in contemporary society generally, the 'We know what's best for you' attitude of the clergy is very much the exception, and is rarely tolerated.

Clearly then, on the journey to a synodal Church, the laity

have a key teaching role in relation to the clergy. Of course, they have been exercising that role for decades, challenging priests and bishops to embrace a more open and inclusive Church. The very fact that we are talking about a synodal journey is due in large part to the insights and perseverance of the laity.

Much of that teaching is being done through the various reform groups, both locally and internationally, and particularly through their published articles and journals. They continue to offer 'fresh paths and new ways of speaking,' to quote Pope Francis, and challenge the whole Church to 'not remain barricaded in our certainties'.

ARCvoice is an important part of that process, and this edition, with a variety of challenging and insightful articles, makes another significant contribution. Let's hope it finds its way into the hands, and hearts, of at least some of our bishops and priests.

John Crothers

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Synod on Synodality 2023 – A Unique Invitation

John Buggy

Pope Francis has established a Synod on Synodality involving all bishops across the world to take place in 2023. This is part of his plan to make the Church more open and accountable in all that it does. His vision is for a Church that responds to the movement of the Spirit within it that a strictly hierarchical model may stifle. In doing so he has presented us with a golden opportunity. He wants to hear from us directly and he has set up a process to enable that to happen. He wants to hear the stories from the people – what they value in their Church, their disappointments, and their aspirations for the future.

In addition to setting up a Vatican Synod Office, he has wisely appointed Sister Nathalie Becquart as Undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. And she will also have a vote in this Synod of Bishops. So far, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) appears to have done little to inspire us, even the bishops themselves, to get the Catholic people actively involved. Their process to date was an on-line set of survey questions after which you could write 250 words and that opportunity expired on the 13th of March.

However, you can still take up the Pope's invitation up until the end of July and my advice is to send your thoughts directly to Sister Nathalie Becquart. Why? Because anything that is sent through our hierarchical channels runs the risk of being omitted, filtered or changed, just like the 17,500 submissions from us that appear to have been largely ignored in the Plenary Council process.

I facilitated a meeting with a dozen people in my parish where each person had the opportunity to speak to three questions: "What is the church we dream of?", "What has hurt or disappointed us in being a member of the Church?" and "What needs to happen for our Church to thrive?" The group listened and reflected on what each person said and then compiled an insightful document to be sent straight to Sister Nathalie. We can all do this. We have never had an opportunity like this before now.

Surely you can gather together a small group of your parishioners or arrange to do it through Zoom, a technique many of us have learned during COVID lockdown. Just email or call me on 0419 217 543 and I will give you the details and process that we followed. It is not hard and it is uplifting.

Alternatively, if you would like to participate in doing this with other ARC members, the Secretariat are offering to hold meetings like this via Zoom. Again, simply contact me. You can join a group online and make a valuable contribution in responding to the invitation of Pope Francis. He wants to hear our stories. We should not let him down.

Letters to the Editor

My comments (see article on Page 14, 'The Faith in Modern Societies') may be of interest to readers of *ARCVoice*.

I received your December 2021 issue from a friend of ours, a former nun, and was impressed by the range of the contents.

It made me realise how much the major churches have in common as they witness to the faith in modern developed societies.

I'm a 'mainstream' Anglican who finds much in common with ARC. I live in Sydney Diocese, but would never describe myself as a 'Sydney Anglican'!

As a former lawyer, I am disappointed by the legalistic approach of many clergy of both our churches.

James Moore
Kogarah. 2217

The theme of the December edition of *ARCVoice* must resonate with its readers. Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Brisbane, says there is no place for the Church to be stating: 'Business as usual'. However, on the other hand, Archbishop

Anthony Fisher, Sydney, has stated we practise Friday abstinence from meat. He also permits Communion on the tongue. Given that COVID-19 in its various strains is a respiratory disease, why is this practice allowed? Why too has not the Third Rite of Reconciliation been permitted? Is it any wonder, to quote Fr. Bryan Massingale, that 'Catholics are exasperated!'

Clarice Melville
Kogarah

Please find attached my membership application form. I have been reading some of the ARC views and opinions on the need for reform with the Catholic Church and find myself very much in accord with your aspirations and approach to contemporary issues confronting the church.

I am a teacher at St Francis Xaviers College (senior secondary), Hamilton NSW and would like to support and stay in touch with ARC's efforts moving forward.

Michael Sibert
Hamilton

Church Relevance in the Modern World

Why the Plenary Council and Synod on Synodality may fail to be effective

Peter Clarke

In response to the request of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) for submissions to the Synod on Synodality, which I understand will be considered at a diocesan, then National, level for eventual consideration at the Synod, I submit the following:

It is my belief that, in framing the questions for responses, the ACBC has made the same mistake that was made for Plenary 2020. The bishops have not learned from the experience of the first assembly! The questions posed might be fine if we were entering into a protracted philosophical and pseudo-theological debate where we expected multiple generations to come to conclusions and then perhaps enter some gentle changes. After all, the church is 2000 years old and change can come slowly. It takes time to change the course of the Titanic. Unfortunately, the iceberg is right in front of us!

The Catholic people of Australia do not want philosophy. The Holy Spirit has been screaming for more than 50 years. Have you not heard? 90% of those who identify as Catholic no longer attend services. We lose our children as soon as they leave primary school. And the bishops remain silent or spend their time covering up for perversion. The bishops do not speak for all who identify as Catholic; they speak for less than 10%.

The average Catholic does not want to discuss vague concepts of 'Communion', 'Participation' or 'Mission'.

The ACBC needs to be willing to discuss the following points honestly and openly:

1. The sexual abuse crisis

- ◆ How they will adequately apologise (which has not been done yet!)?
- ◆ How they will prevent or deal with any future abuse?
- ◆ How they will adequately compensate victims and how that compensation will impact local parishes? (We don't want to wake up one morning and find that our church has been sold);
- ◆ And make sure that all of this is reported openly instead of being dealt with in secret, which only screams 'cover-up'.

2. The role of women in the faith and the church

- ◆ It must be acknowledged that women are EQUAL participants in God's grace and design; that God has no gender and sees no difference in human gender or even transgender. God only sees love and good works;
- ◆ The Church, since the fifth century, has been a major force in suppressing and dominating women;
- ◆ The Church has used the writings of cultures that were male-dominated and, in some cases, misogynistic. Although there were some exceptions, men (enjoying the benefit of education) were able to develop a pseudo-theology to limit women's participation in the life and governance of the Church;
- ◆ Women have an equal and God-given right to participate in the priesthood of Christ.

3. A review of the Church's theology and dogma

- ◆ The Church does not hold an unchanging and unchangeable universal truth. We express our faith to the best of our knowledge and based on the cultures of our time. (As did the Gospel writers, as did Paul and John, as did the prophets of old, as did the fathers of the Church, as did Aquinas);
- ◆ The way we express our truths must befit the times in which we live;
- ◆ BUT our cosmology still remains pre-Galileo and much of our dogma is based on Roman and Greek myths;
- ◆ AND OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN CANNOT BELIEVE SUCH THINGS.

4. There is no such thing as a ‘Universal Church’

- ◆ The Latin Rite church is only one of many traditions that developed from the teachings of the Apostles;
- ◆ This meant that the early church had diverse views and practices dependant on the culture of the region in which a bishopric developed;
- ◆ Constantine forced some consistency but, at the time of Nicaea, the Latin Rite church had only two delegates with no voting rights;
- ◆ The Latin Rite Church gained dominance almost by accident of history, but dominance does not ensure wisdom;
- ◆ The Latin Rite cannot claim to be the holder of Universal truth simply because of past history;
- ◆ The Church of today tends to equate uniformity with universality;
- ◆ The original Church recognised multiple traditions compatible with the cultures of the local bishoprics;
- ◆ Instead, today, the Latin Rite tries to enforce a uniformity based on a Eurocentric and especially Italian culture;

- ◆ This will not work simply because Italian culture does not resonate with the people in Africa, in South America or even in the US, Australia, France or the UK;
- ◆ We must revert to an understanding of common belief but exercised according to local culture;
- ◆ The ACBC must be prepared to fight for a church that fits Australian culture rather than bowing to the mandates of the Vatican.

Unless the issues above are addressed, I believe the Synod on Synodality and Plenary 2020 will be a colossal waste of time. The church attendance and practicing Catholicism will continue to decline and we will be left with a conservative rump of little or no significance. I believe that the ACBC have less than this generation to deal with these issues and to implement and go beyond the changes envisaged by Vatican II.

The Good News of love and service will continue in the community; the workings of the Holy Spirit will ensure this. But the future Apostolic Church will have no allegiance to Roman Catholicism.

PETER CLARKE is an active member of
Concerned Catholics, Wollongong

Retiring from the Secretariat

It is with much regret that Don Humphrey and Peter Meury have found it necessary to retire from the ARC Secretariat owing to the ill health that they are now dealing with.

We have had the benefit of their knowledge and wisdom for many years in shaping ARC and in their contributions to *ARC*Voice**. We wish them well in managing their health and we know that their interest and support continues.

We really need to replace them. **Please offer to Join the Secretariat**, especially if you live outside of NSW. We need your wisdom as we work for change in our Church.

Dust off your Bible

William Grimm

Faith formation often means learning a catechism and, perhaps, a few Bible stories, but too seldom involves a real encounter with the Word of God.

Too much of the management of the Catholic Church presents faith as adherence to rules, most of which start off ‘Thou shalt not’. The tendency to quote the Catechism and Canon Law as the main guides for the Christian life is the most obvious example of this.

Abstract ‘principles’ take precedence over the lives, worth and struggle for holiness of actual people. Jesus laid aside even the laws of God for the sake of people. We sacrifice people to the laws of the Church. Those starting point ‘principles’ are usually abstractions that seldom stand up to scrutiny in the light of scholarship, science, common sense or the Gospel. Faith is, indeed, super-rational, beyond nature, but so much of Catholicism as expounded by many teachers and preachers seems to not rise to the level of the simply rational.

Catechisms and Canons are important, but they must be shaped by the Word of God, measured by the Word of God and in service to the Word of God. As Vatican II declared, ‘Like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture’.

Rather than cooperating with the Word’s use of the Church, we often co-opt the Word, mining Scripture for proof texts for our presuppositions. Too few teachers in the Church seem willing to submit their teaching to the light of Scripture. How many ‘homilies’ have nothing at all to do with the Scripture presented for the community’s nourishment, reflection and challenge? Is it any wonder that people ask how many representatives of the Church are even interested in God rather than power, prestige or pet peeves? Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor no longer works in a dungeon. He has cathedrals, chanceries, pulpits, Twitter accounts and wealthy backers.

And too little is being done to pull the institutional Church back to God. Pope Francis is trying, but the opposition seems to be trying even harder to make God a functionary of Catholicism, Inc. This is a crisis. Unless we individually and as a community

make the Word of God central to our life of faith, the Catholic Church in many places is in danger of turning into a cult. The only remedy to this situation is renewed and deeper closeness by all Catholics to the fullness of revelation, Jesus Christ. And that closeness comes pre-eminently through sacrament, service, prayer and revelation in Scripture and Tradition. ‘We must read with understanding.’

In September 2019, the pope issued *Aperuit illis, a motu proprio* (a teaching on his own initiative) that declared ‘that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God.’ The relationship between the Risen Lord, the community of believers and sacred Scripture is essential to our identity as Christians. Without the Lord who opens our minds to them, it is impossible to understand the Scriptures in depth. Yet the contrary is equally true: without the Scriptures, the events of the mission of Jesus and of his Church in this world would remain incomprehensible. Hence, Saint Jerome could rightly claim: ‘Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’ The first such Sunday was in 2020, and the third will be this coming Sunday, January 23. Pope Francis is prescribing an essential remedy to much that is wrong in the Church today. Unless we take it, the Catholic Church in much of the world will die—and deserve it.

We believe and hope that, if death comes, it will be a prelude to a new life. But in the meantime the world will be bereft of the Church’s mission to proclaim the Reign of God. However, it is not enough to simply read. We must read with understanding. Catholics are not Biblical fundamentalists. We pay attention to the insights that scholars provide. We say we cannot easily understand the thoughts and words of people only a few generations removed from us. Those who were inspired to write the Biblical texts are separated from us by thousands of years, different cultures and different languages.

A good starting point is the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum*, especially Chapter Three: ‘Sacred Scripture, Its Inspiration and Divine Interpretation.’ (Don’t let the words ‘Chapter Three’ scare you off; it’s only six paragraphs, but important ones.) ‘For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed

at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.

But the most important thing is to encounter the Word. That means paying attention to its proclamation in the liturgy. It means well-prepared homilies. It means personal reading and prayer-influenced sharing of insights and questions. The life and mission of the Church as well as the depth and maturity of our personal faith are at stake.

WILLIAM GRIMM is a missionary and presbyter in Tokyo and is the publisher of the

Union of Catholic Asian News (UCA News). The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official editorial position of UCA News.

From *La-Croix International*

20 January 2022

Observations: Dust off your Bible



Meet Sr. Nathalie Becquart, the woman who is helping reshape the Catholic Church

Claire Giangravé

VATICAN CITY—Amid Pope Francis' attempts to reform the hierarchical structures that have defined the Roman Catholic Church for centuries—structures that have in many ways limited the influence of lay people and especially women—few have had such a decisive say on shaping the future of the institution as Sr. Nathalie Becquart.

In February, the pope named the French religious sister of the Congregation of Xavières to become the undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, a summit of church leaders at the Vatican set to address the most cogent topics facing the institution.

Becquart played an important role in the synod dedicated to young people, which set out to understand the demands, concerns and hopes of new generations. In 2019, she was made a consultor to the synod on the Pan-Amazonian region, tackling the challenges created by climate change and promoting the respect and care for creation and the most vulnerable.

When Becquart became the No. 2 officer at the synod, she also became the first woman with a right to vote during the summit of bishops, which has

traditionally only been reserved for men. In 2023, bishops will convene at the Vatican for a synod on the theme **'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission,'** which has the potential to reshape the power dynamics in the institution with an emphasis on listening to the entirety of the faithful.

But for Becquart, having a right to vote in the proceedings is only the tip of the iceberg.

"The most important thing is to have women from the beginning involved in the process, bringing their views, taking part in the discernment, writing the text", she told Religion News Service in a lengthy interview on Oct. 28 inside the offices of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, a stone's throw from the Vatican.

In the following interview, Becquart discusses the role of women in the church and how it has changed under Pope Francis, her thoughts on female ordination, her hopes and aspirations for a new way of being the church and which women inspired her as she set out to enter the oldest boys club in Europe:

Debates on women in the Catholic Church often halt at the question of female ordination. What are your thoughts on female ordination and does this issue play a big role in the synodal discussions?

During many years and centuries the governance of the church was linked to ordination. The bishops and priests had leadership positions. Now we can see more and more—and that's the line Pope Francis is taking—the disconnect between the exercise of leadership from ordination. I'm an example of that. The undersecretary at the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops used to always be a bishop. Now it's me, a non-ordained religious woman, who occupies that same role.

Business companies that are successful usually have women in leadership positions, not because they are women but because they add difference and diversity. That is the key. If you have only the same kind of men, the same kind of training, the same kind of mindset to understand this very complex world, you have a very limited view.

It is always more fruitful to have teamwork with diversity, men and women, different vocations, young people and the elderly.

I think the change is happening with a new acceleration. You can see that many younger bishops said during the Synod on Youth and the Synod on the Amazon that women have played a major role. They were recognized. Many bishops said we work better together if we are not only bishops and men. Now with all the crises, the abuses and problems that arise, bishops feel and express more that they need others, they need to collaborate with lay people, women.

Which women do you look up to at the Vatican and who were your inspirations in terms of female leadership in the church?

We all need, especially the young people, role models. For the women who are pioneers there is not often such a model. But I have benefited from a good number.

Before coming here, I spent one year in North America studying ecclesiology. In Chicago and then at Boston College, I received a lot of empowerment from women in leadership positions or in theology in the United States, especially from religious sisters. There you have more women like that, as in France. I was the first woman to be appointed director of the National Office for Youth and Vocation in France. There were often not so many women like me, so to meet some others in the United States was very helpful.

I was at the Synod on Youth with six other women religious. That was also very helpful because you can share your experience about what we are dealing with. The synod was for me, but also for other women, a place of empowerment.

Do you think female diaconate offers an alternative to female ordination? Is this topic discussed in the synodal process?

It's still in discernment. Truly the purpose of this synod... is to listen to each other, all the diversity of the church, and to discern together. Pope Francis will then decide how the Holy Spirit is calling the church to be today and tomorrow. Many things have evolved in the history of the church, so now it's rather clear that during the early church we had the experience of the female diaconate. It's not really clear what was their role or what kind of ordination they received exactly.

What is very obvious today is that it can't only be men who can be in ministry—but there are many different ways to be in ministry.

The issue is to discern if the way to have that is to

have women deacons or another type of ministry...Now we have women who can be catechists, lecturers, acolytes. We also need some creativity to think about ministry.

What are the main challenges in your opinion to the promotion of women in positions of power in the church?

It's clericalism. But women also need to have the possibility to be trained in theology, to bring their gifts. In many places it's possible; in other places it's more difficult. As Western women, we can easily access higher education, but when you look at the situation of women in the world, in many countries many women are still married under 16. That's the reality. In many countries like that, the church is working for the promotion of women, for education. We need to keep that in mind when we look at the global church.

In the Vatican and during synodal discussions, what are the primary concerns of the Curia and the bishops when it comes to increasing female leadership?

I have a rather good experience of discussion and collaboration. Some priests, bishops or cardinals have been in minor seminary since they were teenagers, entered seminary and then worked in the Curia or worked mainly with priests or in a primarily male environment. If they have to work with women, it's something very new. Some adapt pretty well, even when they are old. For others, yes, it can be more difficult. Other priests who entered the seminary later, or worked in the professional world with women before, often do very well.

Many believe the Catholic Church was and continues to be an institution that is hostile to women because they are not allowed to fully voice their opinions and be decision-makers. What would you say to these critics?

I will say the Catholic Church is very diverse in many different cultures and countries. You have many places where there are very good relationships between men and women. My order is an Ignatian order, so in France we collaborate a lot with the Jesuits. I have studied with the Jesuits, we have done ministry together, we have worked with young people together. I have friendships with many of them.

If we still have the mindset to look at the church only through the institution of priests, bishops and parishes, it's just a part of the church; but the church is also the Caritas, the Catholic schools, the Catholic universities and so many lay movements. Now you have many more women who are presidents of Catholic universities, which was not the case before.

I don't want to minimise the fact that in some places there are some problems, there are women who are not recognised or listened to by the parish priest, etc. It happens, I won't deny that. I also want to underline that there are many places where already women can really express themselves. In many theological faculties you have both men and women. It's an evolution. I have seen that the first generation of women theologians were mainly religious sisters...who got doctorates in theology or Biblical studies. They were the first ones and they felt like they had to do theology like men. Because that's what they were told. Now you have a second generation, and with the new generation, things are changing.

When bishops convene to vote on the synodal process at the Vatican in 2023, you will be the only woman with the right to vote. What does this mean to you and how important is it for you that women have a say in this exclusively male forum?

For me the most important thing is not to have a woman or man who can vote at the end. A synodal process is a process of listening and discernment to reach a consensus.

The most important thing is not to have women who at the end get to vote. The most important thing

is to have women involved in the process from the beginning, bringing their views, taking part in the discernment, writing the text.

I understand, in our society it's very symbolic. But if you just vote at the end and you are not part of the process it's not what's important. It's important to be involved and bring your ideas, your voice and to shape and contribute, collaborate from the beginning in the entire process. That's why it's very important to have women at all stages.

For example, we strongly recommended—and I've been very happy to see that we've asked every diocese to have a synodal reference member, a contact person and preferably a team. We recommend a model of co-leadership with women. Now in many dioceses the person who is responsible for the synodal consultations is a woman working with the bishops at the conference table. That is a key place. It is very important to have women who will contribute to lead the process, to involve other women.

CLAIRE GIANGRAVÉ is the Vatican Correspondent for Religion News Service. The interview has been edited for length and clarity. Source: *Religion News Service*, Dec 9, 2021

The Irresistible Force of Grace

The importance of the Resurrection cannot be underestimated. It is often said that the Resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity; in fact, that, without the Resurrection, there would be no Christianity.

In dying, Jesus gave us something new. Theologians are recognising this process as the natural pattern of Christian Passover.

'Within everything that exists, within each person, there is', as Pope Francis says, 'an irresistible force or love energy.' That energy we call Grace. Grace is everywhere, freely available to all.

The central doctrine of Christianity is, as we have been told, of course, the mystery of the Resurrection. It is far greater than a meeting with Mary Magdalene in the garden of Gethsemane. Pope Benedict XVI sees Resurrection as a qualitative leap in the history of evolution and of life in general—a new dimension of being.

'Inspired by current scientific knowledge about the evolution of the universe, theologians offer a renewed and dynamic understanding of a universal resurrection.' Astronomers believe that the sun, earth and the other planets exist as parts of a star that died many millions of years ago, exploding and scattering its ashes which later went on to coalesce to form a new star and planets. Christians believe that just as Jesus died, His resurrection as the 'Cosmic Christ' signalled His constant renewing. Instead of our being 'locked away in the tomb' the stone has been rolled away and we are ready to face each day with a new view where we see ourselves as part of creation. The choice is ours to accept God's grace or ignore it.

Any quotations come from Daniel O'Leary's book, *An Astonishing Truth* Chapter 48 'The Irresistible Force of Grace.'

Don Humphrey

The Progress of Paul's Three Equalities

Alan Clague

Paul wished to create an egalitarian church. He outlined this in his letter to the Galatians: 'There is no longer Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28). How has this worked out in practice over the centuries?

JEW: Paul's most immediate problem was the nexus between the Christian movement and Judaism. At that time, some followers of Christ attended synagogues, and some argued strongly that Christians should follow Jewish law, including mandatory male circumcision. Paul fought against this vigorously on many occasions (e.g. Gal 2:16 'A person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Christ'). He was finally vindicated in the Council of Jerusalem when Peter and James also supported dropping of most Jewish laws (Acts 15:19-20).

Growing hostility developed between Jews and Christians, with the eventual exclusion of Christians from synagogues. When Christianity became dominant in the fourth century this led to the excesses of anti-semitism for almost two millennia. When charging Christians interest on loans was forbidden for Christians, but not for Jews, Jews became money lenders to bishops and kings. The kings could charge Jews exorbitant taxes, and the bishops could declare a pogrom to avoid repayment. Forced conversion of Jews to Christianity was practised, and then they were subjected to the Inquisition. Hitler's persecution of Jews had a solid foundation in Christian practice. We prayed for 'the perfidious Jews' until 1959, when it was stopped by Pope John XXIII. Catholic anti-semitism was finally laid to rest at Vatican II. Originally, a document specific for Judaism was proposed, but it was quashed by conservative and Middle Eastern delegates. Eventually, a document on general religious tolerance, *Nostra aetate*, was proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in 1965.

SLAVERY: The issue of slavery was more difficult for Paul and for subsequent reformers. It was entrenched in Greco-Roman society, and Paul himself did not demand freedom for the slave Onesimus in his letter to the slave's owner, Philemon. By the end of the first century, a generation after Paul's death, the status of slaves was reduced in the Pastoral Epistles. 'Tell slaves to be submissive to their

masters' (Titus 2:9). 'Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their master as worthy of all honour' (1 Tim 6:1). Slavery remained in Christian society, although it was condemned by many senior Church figures, but not forbidden. Enslavement of non-Christians was endorsed. The conquest of the Americas, primarily by Catholic Spain and Portugal, resulted in massive enslavement of native peoples and negroes which the Church condemned, but could do little to influence. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas believed it arose because of original sin. As with anti-semitism, slavery was condemned definitively in Vatican II. *Gaudium et spes*, the pastoral constitution of the Church, describes slavery and other forms of insult to human dignity as 'infamies'. None-the-less, some conservative theologians claim that slavery is not intrinsically wrong because they are unwilling to accept that the Church magisterium ever changes its laws.

GENDER: The issue of gender equality, like that of slavery, is complicated by the interaction of Paul's authentic writing in Galatians with the mores of first century society. Jewish society was fundamentally patriarchal, with many restrictions on women (including initiating divorce). Greco-Roman society was also patriarchal, although women were allowed to initiate divorce, and many were powerful in the community. Paul names a number of women as senior figures in his churches.

In the generation after Paul's death (when others authored Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles in Paul's name), the pressure to conform to society became too great, and Church leaders forbade women to speak in Church or become bishops, and demanded that they become subservient to their husbands and have children (e.g. I Tim 2:11-15). Both secular society and the Church maintained this suppression until the nineteenth century, when western secular society gradually opened up to women. Even so, in Australia until the 1960s women were significantly disadvantaged in commercial and social life. This has been changed gradually, in theory, if not fully in practice.

The Church has consistently maintained a strong patriarchal stance, even when secular society was changing. Some early Fathers were quite misogynistic, and made women the scapegoats for sexual sins of men. Although women were approved as deacons in the early Church (I Tim 3:11), subsequently the Church developed a complete intolerance for women in ministry. To prevent women's involvement in cathedral choirs, the Vatican initiated the custom of using men castrated pre-pubertally ('castrati'). This illegal and immoral

process continued until the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, 2022 will be the centenary of the death of the last Vatican castrato.

In 1930 Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Casti connubii*, on Christian marriage, in which, in Section 75, he condemns the ability of married women ‘to be able to follow her own bent and be able to devote herself to business and even public affairs’.

Vatican II initially had no female auditors but, at the third session, 23 were appointed, although not allowed to speak. Some of these auditors supported ordination of women. *Gaudium et spes* states that ‘discrimination on the basis of sex’ is to be ‘overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent’. In 1965, at the end of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI gave an ‘Address to Women’ in which he stated: ‘But the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being achieved in its fulness....an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved’.

In 1994, Pope John Paul II issued *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* (Priestly ordination) in which he stated that priestly ordination was reserved for males alone, saying ‘The Church has no authority to confer priestly ordination on women’. His biblical rationale

was that Jesus appointed men only as apostles. This statement still stands. In 2021, Pope Francis amended canon law to allow women to be appointed lectors and acolytes, the first time in the modern era that women have been admitted to minor orders.

Since its Vatican II pronouncements, there has been no widespread, deep-seated opposition to the Church’s condemnation of anti-semitism or slavery, in spite of its 1900 years history of ignoring Paul’s instruction. The situation is vastly different for gender equality. Within a generation of Paul’s death, Church authorities made fraudulent claims that he suppressed women from Church ministry and a deliberative Church voice. This was maintained relentlessly until Vatican II. But, in stark contrast to antisemitism and slavery, the prohibitions on entry to the diaconate and priesthood have been vigorously maintained, using a rationale that most biblical scholars condemn as laughable. Australia and most of the world has accepted gender equality, but the Church is in the thrall of men who are unwilling to share their power and status with the other half of humanity. What must Paul think?

ALAN CLAGUE is a member of the ARC Secretariat.

Dear Pope Francis,

We, members of the international Catholic Community, submit for your consideration the following Ten Commandments for Church reform. We urge that these principles should be enshrined in Church Law and faithfully implemented on all levels.

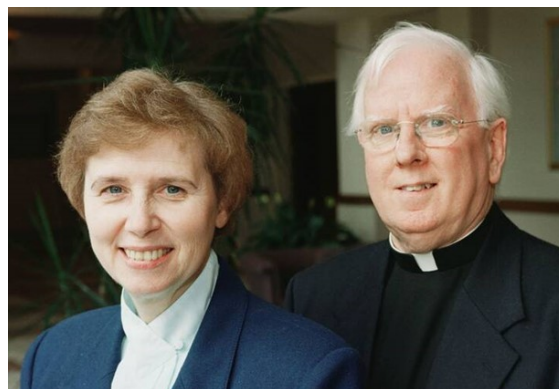
- 1. Allow theologians and other scholars unrestricted freedom of research without fear of consequences.**
- 2. Recognize that a pastoral leader's first priority is caring for people, not upholding ecclesiastical institutions.**
- 3. Select perceptive administrators in the Roman Curia, not narrow-minded bureaucrats intent on blocking Church reform.**
- 4. Appoint open-minded pastoral bishops, not hard-line traditionalists.**
- 5. Abandon the misguided repression of sex, based on the assumption that any sexual act not geared to procreation is sinful.**
- 6. Grant parents freedom to plan their families responsibly.**
- 7. Give women full access to holy orders.**
- 8. Allow priests to benefit from the support of a loving spouse.**
- 9. Respect the God-given dignity of every member of the community – treating grownups as adults.**
- 10. Update church doctrine and practice after listening to the advice of independent competent scholars, pastoral councils and experienced pastors.**

**With all best wishes and thanks for your inspiring leadership,
John Wijngaards and all the undersigned**

Johannes Nicolaas Maria Wijngaards is a Catholic scripture scholar and a laicized priest. Since 1977 he has been prominent in his public opposition to the teaching of the Catholic Church on the impossibility of ordaining women to the priesthood. The "undersigned" (not listed here) includes Australian Reforming Catholics.

New Ways Ministry

Source: Wikipedia



New Ways Ministry is a ministry of advocacy and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Catholics. The national organisation is primarily based in the State of Maryland. It was one of the earliest groups attempting to broaden the way Catholics have traditionally dealt with LGBT issues, and was established by Sister Jeannine Gramick and Father Robert Nugent.

In 2011, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated that ‘in no manner is the position proposed by **New Ways Ministry** in conformity with Catholic teaching and in no manner is this organisation authorised to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church or to identify itself as a Catholic organisation’.

In 2021, Pope Francis addressed two letters to New Ways Ministry, in which he commended the organisation for its outreach to the LGBTQ community and referred to one of its co-founders, Loreto Sister Jeannine Gramick, as ‘a valiant woman’ who had suffered much for her ministry. He also said he is aware that **New Ways Ministry’s** ‘history has not been an easy one’, but that loving one’s neighbour is still the second commandment, tied ‘necessarily’ to the first commandment to love God, while thanking them for ‘their neighbourly work’.

History

New Ways Ministry was founded in 1977 by Sr. Jeannine Gramick, a Roman Catholic sister, and Fr. Robert Nugent, a Roman Catholic priest. The ministry expanded their existing work of writing and speaking on homosexuality in the years following 1971, with the aim of creating acceptance for gay and lesbian Catholics within the Roman Catholic Church.

It adopted its name from the pastoral letter of Bishop Francis Mugavero of the Diocese of Brooklyn, ‘Sexuality: God’s Gift’. Written in 1976, the letter addressed gay and lesbian Catholics, as well as the widowed, adolescents, the divorced, and those having sexual relations outside of marriage, stating: ‘...we pledge our willingness to help you ...to try to find new ways to communicate the truth of Christ because we believe it will make you free.’ These sentiments inspired the pastoral efforts by the co-

founders to build bridges between differing constituencies in Catholicism.

In 1984 Cardinal James Hickey barred the organisation from the Archdiocese of Washington because of its dissent from traditional Catholic teaching on the issue of homosexuality, which condemns sexual activity between people of the same gender.

Robert Nugent SDS

Nugent was born in Norristown, Pennsylvania in 1937 and attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. He was ordained as a priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1965 and assigned to Stella Maris parish in Philadelphia. In 1970, he assisted police in stopping two suicide attempts on the Walt Whitman Bridge. In 1971, he left parish ministry and obtained a masters in library science from Villanova University and a masters in theology from Yale Divinity School. He also worked at a skid-row hospice.

In 1975, Nugent left the Archdiocese and joined the staff of the Quixote Center in Maryland. In 1977, he joined the Salvatorians. That same year he founded **New Ways Ministry** with Jeannine Gramick. ‘We knew it was risky,’ he told the *St. Petersburg Times* in 1999, ‘because Catholics weren’t talking and writing about sexuality’.

Nugent served as a consultant for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on its 1997 pastoral document on homosexuality, ‘Always Our Children’. In 1999, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then under the leadership of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, condemned the organisation’s positions on homosexuality, and ordered co-founders Gramick and Nugent to cease pastoral ministry within the gay and lesbian community. Fr. Nugent returned to parish-based ministry, but Sr. Gramick refused to comply. While he stepped back from public ministry, Nugent continued to counsel gay and lesbian Catholics privately, and advised theologians and scholars

working on issues of homosexuality. He also wrote of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Merton.

Nugent retired in June 2013, and died of lung cancer at the age of 76 on January 1, 2014 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, location of the US Province of Salvatorians. Some of Nugent's papers are in the Special Collections of Marquette University.

Mission and background

New Ways Ministry advocates for acceptance of LGBT people among Catholics and among the general population. In the belief that homophobia and transphobia stem from a lack of understanding, **New Ways Ministry** focuses on educating families, churches, and communities through dialogue, publications and research, and educational programming. Publications have included responses to Vatican Instructions, 'Homosexuality: A Positive Catholic Perspective' and 'Marriage Equality: A Positive Catholic Approach,' and symposia on the issue of homosexuality in the Catholic church have hosted speakers including Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of the Archdiocese of Detroit and Bishop Matthew Clark of the Diocese of Rochester. They also organise Catholics nationally in support of marriage equality initiatives.

New Ways Ministry partners with Equally Blessed, a coalition of Catholics who support full LGBT equality, and the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics.

Opposition to its work

New Ways Ministry has received criticism throughout its more than 35 years of active ministry. In 1984, the Vatican ordered co-founders Nugent and Gramick to resign from **New Ways Ministry**. Both continued publishing, speaking, and ministering around gay and lesbian issues within the Catholic Church until 1999.

In 2000, in response to Gramick's teaching that homosexuality is a legitimate 'alternative' lifestyle, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith noted the 'grave doctrinal error' in her work and declared that she should no longer be engaged in pastoral work with homosexuals, since her teachings 'had] caused confusion among the Catholic people and . . . harmed the community of the Church'.

The president of the U.S. bishops' conference, Bishop Joseph Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, had issued a lengthy statement responding to 'concerns expressed, mostly by religious men and women as well as members of the laity' about the notification. In it, Bishop Fiorenza addressed the conscience issue, stating, 'It is not an invasion of conscience for the Church to ask those who minister in her name about their adherence to Church teaching.'

Gramick's own religious order—the School Sisters of Notre Dame—asked her to stop speaking publicly on gay rights. Gramick indicated her intention to carry on her work, stating, 'I choose not to collaborate in my own oppression by restricting a basic human right "to speak". To me this is a matter of conscience.' She transferred from the School Sisters of Notre Dame to the Sisters of Loretto at this time, who supported her continued ministry around LGBT issues.

In 2010, Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago and President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), stated **New Ways Ministry** did not present an authentic view of Catholic teaching. Instead he insisted that it 'confuses the faithful about the Church's efforts to defend traditional marriage and to minister to homosexual persons'. In March 2011 the USCCB affirmed George's statement and reiterated '...that in no manner is the position proposed by New Ways Ministry in conformity with Catholic teaching and in no manner is this organisation authorised to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church or to identify itself as a Catholic organisation.'

Twenty years ago ...

The Catholic Archbishop, the Most Rev George Pell, yesterday refused Holy Communion to openly gay and lesbian parishioners, coupling his first Sydney confrontation over the issue with an attack on homosexuality.

Quoting the new conservative mantra of the church, Dr Pell told the congregation at St Mary's Cathedral: 'God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, and important consequences follow from this. Our Judeo-Christian religious tradition allows men and women sexual expression within the bounds of family life, a sexuality which is life-giving. Homosexual acts are contrary to the natural law, they close the sexual act to the gift of life.'

The Sydney Morning Herald
May 20, 2002

Pope Francis greets dog owners

Lisa Fullam

In his January 5 2018 general audience, Pope Francis chided people for not having enough children, accusing them of replacing children with pets. He said that parenthood provides ‘something fundamental, something important’ in people’s lives. He said there is ‘a form of selfishness’ in couples deciding to have just one child and that this ‘is a denial of fatherhood and motherhood and diminishes us, takes away our humanity’.

Oh, for heaven’s sake.

The pope did get one thing right: Parenthood can provide ‘something fundamental, something important’ in people’s lives. (I say this as a non-parent.) Like marriage, parenthood can be a school of virtue.

In parenting, people learn to navigate the twists and turns of another person’s development from the absolute dependence of infancy, to the first adventures of a toddler, to dealing with the rebelliousness that can characterise adolescence, to ‘launching’ a new adult into the world, and sometimes to receiving care in our own old age.

Those of us who do not parent must find other ways to learn the truths that parenting reveals about human nature. But the pope’s address is so riddled with odd or wrong-headed statements that I wonder if he thought it through before launching in.

As a theologian and a veterinarian, I have six questions I’d like to ask the pope about this speech.

1. In this time of looming climate catastrophe driven by human activity, why on earth would the pope say that one child is not enough? It is true that at present the world could support the whole burgeoning human community if we had the political will to do so. Truly, redistribution of wealth and resources could feed all God’s children, for now.

However, we are rapidly reaching a point where the planet cannot handle more people. Some, including the late Harvard sociobiologist E.O. Wilson, suggest that a human population greater than 10 billion would be unsustainable. Frankly, it’s about time for people in the developed world, we who gobble far more than our just share of resources, to slow down a bit as we work toward that better world where the planet’s riches are shared by all.

Further, the pope has elsewhere emphasised intergenerational justice, focusing on the kind of world

we’ll leave our children and their children. Our responsibility to work for the common good extends not just across geographical boundaries, but across time into the future as well. Recklessly producing more kids than we can hope to feed on this planet violates intergenerational justice.

2. We are currently in a dreadful biodiversity crisis. We are in the midst of—or at best on the very brink of—the sixth mass extinction, the first since a meteor strike and other factors doomed the dinosaurs. Why does Francis call care for the animals with whom we share this planet selfish?

One of the great insights of his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* is that the natural world exists as an end in itself, a source of delight to its creator. It is in extending ourselves to care for the nonhuman other—yes, even dogs and cats!—that we enact a care for creation that celebrates the creator. ‘Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself,’ Francis wrote, and for some of us it is easier to start to come to that spiritual awareness with the nonhuman companions with whom we share hearth and home.

3. Why does the leader of a religion that—on a good day—proclaims that love is limitless, think that people substitute pets for children? In my work as a veterinarian, I see every day that love is NOT a zero-sum game. Loving and caring for animals can inspire people to love and care for humans, and vice versa. Children—and adults—can learn to care for vulnerable others by caring for animals. Animals can elicit love from people. Real love multiplies and is abundant.

In the field of virtue ethics, we recognise that every small step of virtue helps us grow toward more perfect virtue. That is clearly true when people extend the ambit of their concern beyond our own species, and when people learn to care for humanity more deeply when inspired by the devotion of a pet. Besides, if childless people are too selfish to parent, why would Francis want to entrust them with kids in the first place?

4. If not raising children ‘diminishes us, takes away our humanity,’ why does Francis tolerate magisterial opposition to adoption by LGBT people? Since there is no credible evidence that LGBT people are worse parents than heterosexual couples—and some evidence that gay parents do a better job raising kids than straight parents—why wouldn’t Francis demand that Catholic adoption agencies serve all who present themselves with the generosity and grace to raise kids in

need? If parenting is a matter of human dignity, then Francis should not tolerate groundless exclusion of qualified would-be parents.

5. Parenthood provides ‘something fundamental, something important’ in people’s lives; if not parenting ‘diminishes us, takes away our humanity,’ then surely celibacy should not be required of those who would serve the church. If the pope is correct, then why is the church deliberately damaging those who would serve it? Mandatory priestly celibacy is merely a discipline of the Western church, shored up with flimsy theological pretexts. If Francis believes what he said about parenthood, he could eliminate that obsolete rule with the stroke of a papal pen.

6. Francis warns that not having children leads to an ‘old age in solitude, with the bitterness of loneliness’. Alas, that fate is not limited to childless seniors, but to any of us who may outlive our partners, our friends, or, tragically, our children. Our mobile society often finds families scattered across a continent, visiting rarely, or relying on virtual visits to pick up the slack. Why didn’t Francis take the opportunity to remind the Catholic world of the treasure of our ecclesial communities, and call us to be especially careful to reach out to the elderly, the isolated, or those new in our neighbourhoods?

Yes, having a non-human companion in the house can help allay loneliness—pet ownership offers a number of physical, emotional, psychological and even spiritual benefits for older folks, both those with and without strong local support networks.

Instead of answering my questions, perhaps the pope would do better to visit an animal shelter, and ask himself whether he’s ready to take on the responsibility of a puppy or a kitten—especially since he’s ruled out taking on responsibility for a partner or children.

At first, he should keep the pet in an area of the papal apartments where a little chewing or the occasional ‘accident’ wouldn’t ruin any priceless art. The pope might learn something about utter devotion from the warm eyes of a dog, or something about convivial companion-ship from sitting with a purring cat.

And in the welcome he’d receive when he gets home after a long workday, he might see hints of the boundless love of the peaceable kingdom preached by Jesus, who, after all, was born in a stable, surrounded by animals.

LISA FULLAM DVM ThD. is a professor of moral theology at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University. This article was published in *National Catholic Reporter*, 14.1.2022.

The Faith in Modern Societies

James Moore

The December 2021 issue of *ARC*Vo*ice* provides a well-reasoned basis for churches to engage with well-educated modern societies. Some of the wide range of issues covered included the interpretation of the scriptures in the light of modern Biblical scholarship, sexuality, clericalism and clergy training, the ministry of women and representative government in the church.

All of these were handled with reason and a view to ministry in our society. All churches must face up to these issues in our modern world. The Franciscan Richard Rohr recently wrote that Catholics were told to believe the pope, the bishops and the priests, while Protestants were told to believe the Bible.

In both cases, history shows that belief in infallibility or inerrancy has often been misplaced. As regards the Bible, many passages claimed to be history are contradicted by other passages or by modern historical knowledge.

Of more importance are passages put by writers into the mouth of God which are inconsistent with the God revealed by Jesus Christ. The following are a few examples of these:

Slavery: Exodus 21:7 Leviticus 27:1-7. God is alleged to be regulating slaves as if they were livestock.

Status of women: Exodus 21:7. Women were the legal property of men and God allegedly provided rules for a father to sell his daughter into slavery.

Genocide: 1 Samuel 15: 1-4. God allegedly said ‘put them all to death, men and women, children and babes in arms’. These days this conduct would lead to a charge before the International Criminal Court.

Such problem texts must be tested by the doctrine of the goodness of God as revealed in Christ. Attempts to cling to beliefs in church or Biblical inerrancy lead to theological gymnastics and are barnacles on the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ in contemporary society.

Refer Letters to the Editor for information on the writer.

Don't leave a Sinking Ship

Don Humphrey

I became a Catholic when my parents had me baptised as an infant. I am still a Catholic because that is what I want to be.

But so many things are wrong in my beloved Catholic Church. Foremost is its attitude to women. Next, it fails to acknowledge homosexuality as a state of some people's lives and it maintains clericalism. The list goes on and on. However, none of these wrongs will convince me to abandon the Church of my life. One could call me a rusted-on Catholic.

I wish fervently that the Church will eventually see that it is wrong. It will, I hope, give the laity a greater say in what it preaches. My belief is that if one wants to change the Church then one should stay in the Church. Only then can one say what needs to be done. It is no good trying to change the Church if one is no longer a member of that Church.

What can we say? What can we do if we want to stay in the Church although we recognise the wrongs. There

is lots we can do. We can support Catholic organisations like, and including, Australian Reforming Catholics that are actively campaigning against those wrongs. We can spread the word to our friends and to fellow parishioners. We can attend parish meetings and talk about those wrongs. The newspapers are not interested in Catholic matters so one must look for other ways. One way is to leave old copies of *ARCVOICE* in places where people might pick one up and read it. ARC is only too happy to supply bulk copies of old *ARCVOICES* to anyone requesting them. Or publicise the ARC website: www.e-arc.org which contains all back copies of *ARCVOICE*.

I implore those who are considering leaving the Church to think again. Personally, I think that some of our Protestant Christians are doing better and have been doing better for a long time. I am seriously considering supporting many of things they are doing and attending meetings showcasing some very good Christians. In doing so, I am not committing treason. I am not abandoning the Catholic Church. I think that the Catholic Church can learn a lot from them. Much of what I see in our separated brethren is 'straight' Jesus and I am a 'straight Jesus' man.

Don Humphrey is a retired member of the ARC Secretariat.

Vatican includes group backing women's ordination on website

Nicole Winfield

The Vatican has included a group that advocates for women's ordination on a website promoting a two-year consultation of rank-and-file Catholics, indicating that Pope Francis wants to hear from all Catholics during the process.

The inclusion of the Women's Ordination Conference on the website promoting the Vatican's 2023 'synod,' or meeting of bishops, is significant since the Vatican has long held the group at arm's length. Catholic doctrine forbids the ordination of women as priests.

In the run-up to the synod, the Vatican has asked dioceses, religious orders and other Catholic groups to embark on listening sessions so ordinary Catholics can talk about their needs and hopes for the church.

The Women's Ordination Conference launched a 'Let Her Voice Carry' campaign to do just that, providing a 'tool kit' for users to understand the synod process and participate in it. It has also launched a series of online listening sessions so participants can engage virtually.

Last year, the Vatican office made headlines after it initially included and then removed a link to an advocacy group for the Catholic LGBTQ community which had also launched a campaign to seek the views of gay Catholics in the pre-synod process. The website moderators apologized and restored the link to the group, New Ways Ministry.

Francis has called for women to take on greater decision-making roles in the church, but has strongly upheld the ban on their ordination.

Kate McElwee, executive director of the Women's Ordination Conference, said she was surprised that the Vatican had accepted the group's inclusion on the 'Resources' site and said it showed 'a lot of courage' from the synod office.

'The integrity and impact of the synod will depend on the inclusion of courageous conversations about women's equality,' she told The Associated Press in an email. 'I hope that this move from the synod office empowers more women to engage with the process and speak out.'

She noted that the Vatican's synod organisers have stressed the need to listen to those on the margins of the church, and that 'women's ordination advocates, and particularly those women called to priesthood, are some of the most marginalised in the church'.

Associated Press, Jan 20, 2022

Have your say!

ARC*Voice* is a report of news, opinion and reflection on the urgent need for renewal and reform in the Catholic Church.

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Please send material to:

The Editor
ARC*Voice*
Unit 68/28 Curagul Road
NORTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074
OR (preferably) email:
mknowlden@bigpond.com

Tel:

0431 198 161

02 9488 7927

ARC Secretariat

Rob Brian 0438 718 519 robertfbrian@gmail.com

John Buggy (Spokesperson) 0419217543 jbuggy@ozemail.com.au

Alan Clague 07 3376 3879 clague@aapt.net.au

Margaret Knowlden (Editor) 02 9488 7927 mknowlden@bigpond.com

Shirley Lohman 02 9484 4718 shirley.lohman@live.com.au

Helen McDermott 0417 606 116 helen.mcd@bigpond.com

Maureen Ryan 0403 931 782 maureenpr8@gmail.com

Noelene Uren 0402 923 601 wlmur5@bigpond.com

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Send to ARC c/- Rob Brian 28 Lancaster Road, DOVER HEIGHTS, New South Wales 2030

Tel: 0438 718 519 e-mail: robertfbrian@gmail.com