BREAKING BREAD AT THE TABLE OF JUSTICE:
A CELEBRATION OF
prophetic
persistence
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE, SINCE 1975

45TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
NOVEMBER 27-30, 2020
45
Years of WOC

Pope Benedict XVI,
How long must women wait for equality?
Ordain Catholic Women

SEXISM IS A SIN
REPELT!

NEW PRIESTLY MINISTRY
From the Executive Director

Welcome to the 45th anniversary celebrations of the Women’s Ordination Conference!

This weekend is about the journey we are on together toward ordination justice, equity, and transformation as protagonists in our faith. It is not about closed doors or oppressive systems, but all the ways we – together – have cultivated joyful resistance, prophetic persistence, and renewed priesthood. You and I both know that this is challenging and often lonely work, so I hope this weekend reminds each of us just how important your place is in our story, our tapestry, and our future. May we be reminded of the possibilities within ourselves, know the solidarity we share with one another, and find courage on our path as Church in praxis.

Serving as the Executive Director of the Women’s Ordination Conference is a great privilege in my life, and preparing for this anniversary was no expectation. Even in such a challenging and painful year, or perhaps because of it, WOC members have generously shared their gifts, ministries, and energies to truly celebrate at the Table of Justice. I would like to especially thank my board of directors, the advisory board, our growing staff, and all those who submitted video messages, for their efforts and creativity.

We stand on the shoulders of those visionary and courageous members of the first Organizing Task Force, and the collective energy of the more than 1,200 people who gathered Thanksgiving weekend in 1975 to claim their ministerial equality and embark on a path of renewal and hope. We honor the faith-filled and fearless leaders who took up the torch for WOC and marched, prayed, chanted, and challenged male-dominated spaces and structures not just as fabulous activists, but as feminist, mujerista, and womanist theologians, ministers, lobbyists, insiders and outsiders, and modern-day prophets.

As we honor our roots, I am also incredibly proud of the ways in which WOC has grown as an organization and a movement.

- As our understandings of feminism(s) have deepened, so has WOC’s commitment to intersectionality and inclusion, especially of those of the trans and non-binary communities,
for whom WOC should be considered a place of acceptance.

- With our office in Rome and ever-growing international connections, WOC is a respected voice and witness on the global stage. In 2019, we became an NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations.
- We have a dedicated Spanish-language program, Escuchando a las Mujeres, for Latinx outreach, community-building, and resources.
- Through our scholarship, we have awarded women and non-binary persons in theology studies $24,000 to support their discernment on their spiritual and academic paths.
- We revived the Young Feminist Network to be a supportive place for Catholic-rooted people to find each other, question, and explore their relationship with faith, social justice, and the Church.
- We’ve become skilled video editors, bringing our message of Gospel equality to new and emerging platforms on social media.

Nevertheless, as our organization becomes more robust and vibrant through new initiatives, we remain uncompromisingly committed to our mission, working tirelessly for the ordination of women into a renewed priesthood. To do so, the “Ministry of Irritation” is where we shine: as bold, creative, radical, faithful witnesses for gender justice. Our demonstrations change conversations, impact the media, and reach the highest levels of the Vatican. A staff-favorite quote to this point is from Pope Benedict XVI’s secretary, Georg Gänswein: “I am of course aware that there is a noisy movement which has as its main ideological goal the fight for the female priesthood.” That’s us.

Not unlike those of the early Church who gathered in their homes to break bread, this weekend we will celebrate together from our homes in communion with one another. Please join us on Friday for a toast, herstory quiz, and storytelling from some of our founding members; enjoy a day of short videos of activists, theologians, staff members, and friends of WOC who have been inspired by our mission on Saturday; and join us to break bread at the table of justice during our Sunday liturgy. Throughout the weekend we will have an online auction filled with creative pieces and collections of women’s ordination-inspired items.

We have an ambitious fundraising goal for the weekend ($45,000 for our 45th year!) and I hope that you will take this opportunity to renew your membership or make an anniversary gift to be counted as one of the members of the Women’s Ordination Conference during this important moment in our Church.

We are able to mark this milestone because of you and your unwavering commitment to baptismal equality. Your gifts, ministries, prayers, activism, and financial contributions sustain our collective vision for renewal and transformation. Thank you for being part of WOC’s story and the story that will be told of how women came to be ordained in the Catholic Church.

In living hope,

Kate McElwre
WOC Board, Staff, & Advisory Members

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Text WOC45 to 44321 or donate online at womensordination.org/gala to help us reach our fundraising goal!
Gala Schedule

All times are listed in Eastern Standard Time

Friday, November 27: Purple Friday
12:00 PM: Opening toast, interactive quiz, and celebration!

Saturday, November 28: Prophetic Voices
9:00 AM: Jennifer O’Malley and Liz Carlin; Kate McElwee; Sr. Margaret Farley, RSM; Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL;
11:00 AM: Natalia Imperatori-Lee, PhD.; Miriam Duignan; Fr. Roy Bourgeois;
1:00 PM: Erin Saiz Hanna; Fr. Luke Hansen, SJ; Nontando Hadebe, PhD.; Sr. Martha Ann Kirk CCVI;
3:00 PM: Sr. Teresa Forcades, OSB; Fr. Tony Flannery CSsR; Lilian Medina Romero; We Are Church Ireland;
5:00 PM: Our closing message!

Sunday, November 29: Inclusive Liturgy
10:30 AM: Liturgy begins on Zoom

Monday, November 30:
11:59 PM: Auction closes

womensordiantion.org/gala
Sponsors

We are so grateful to all the sponsors who make our prophetic persistence possible!

**Apostle to the Apostles**
$2,500
National Coalition of American Nuns

**Catherine's Champions**
$1,000
Catholics for Choice
Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community
New Ways Ministry
Roman Catholic Women Priests

**St. Hildegard's Helpers**
$500
Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests (ARCWP)
CORPUS
Dignity Washington
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**Joan of Arc's Sparks**
$100
Catholic Women’s Ordination (CWO)
The Church of the Beatitudes
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Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community

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Bob Shine
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A Prayer for 45 Years

by Katie Lacz

Persistent, Uncontainable Spirit,
In every age you have called faithful women,
As you called our foremothers all those years ago,
out of bondage to old ways,
calcified traditions,
and unjust institutions
Into exodus in a wilderness that was as yet uncharted.

They did not know what they would find,
But they knew you promised living water.
They did not know when the journey would end,
But knew you enlivened each step along the way.

Since that time,
We have found the wilderness to be a place of unhindered growth.
Of new forms of life and ministry flourishing,
Nourishing us
As the journey continues.

We have found ourselves,
and found You, O God,
among that which is untamed.
There, we are free:
to be priests to your people
To speak prophetically to power
To persist until justice abounds in the Church that we love.

Many have traveled on this unfinished path
And have returned to the embrace of your arms.
Still new sojourners arrive with fresh energy and hope,
Reminding us that our continued exodus is a journey of promise.

We re-commit ourselves to fidelity to this journey
And to the Spirit in the wilderness who has formed us
So that, at the sound of our voices and the sight of our arms raised in prayer
The stony institutions of patriarchy will crumble
Revealing the living Body of Christ arisen in our varied bodies.

Wild Companion, Earth-Shaker,
May Your fierce love continue to embolden us
To share your sacramental presence so freely
That the Church is drawn out of the sanctuary
And into the holy wilderness with us and with You.

Amen.
A Liturgy for Prophetic Persistence

Prelude

Welcome: Kate McElwee, Executive Director

Opening Song: "Keep on Moving Forward/Siguemos Adelante" by Emma’s Revolution

Opening Prayer
God of her-story, Divine Future Hope,
We gather, like our ancestors on this journey did 45 years ago,
On this first weekend of Advent.
We say, as they did: “We are alive in joy and hope and have cause for celebration --
yet near us, even within us, death, in many and varied forms is ever present.”
Carry with us the joy and the pain that this year, in particular, has deepened in us.
We recall the living hope you poured into that overflowing room,
Spilled out now into this global community gathered today.
Open our hearts to this time of joyful hope, as we transform all that is unjust into a
new reflection of God’s creative love.
We are grateful for this time of celebration:
We celebrate - because the love of Christ leaves us no choice.

All: Amen.

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First Reading: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

A Reading from the First Book of Samuel:

Then Hannah prayed:
"My heart delights in You, O God. My horn, my dignity, is exalted in You. I have swallowed up my enemies. I rejoice in my victory. There is no one holier than you, O Compassionate One. There is no Rock like our Loving God. All bragging must cease. Boastful arrogance must come to an end. For the Holy One is all-knowing, and weighs all mortal deeds. The bows of the mighty are broken, while the tottering put on strength. The well-fed hire themselves out for bread, while the hungry feast on spoil. The barren wife bears seven children, while the mother of many languishes. The Source of All puts to death and gives life, casts down and raises up again. The Divine makes the poor and makes the rich, humbles and exalts. Our Beloved raises the needy from the dust, lifting the poor from the ash heap, seating them with nobles and making a glorious throne their heritage. The foundations of the Earth belong to God, and God sets the world upon them. The Holy One lights the ways of the just. And delivers the evildoer to judgment. It is not by strength that the just prevail; It is God who shatters foes. The Creator thunders against them in the skies. God judges the ends of the Earth. Now God will endow the ruler with strength And exalt the head of the anointed one."

Hear what the Spirit Sophia is saying to Her people.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection from Allison Connelly

Interlude: "The Circle’s Larger" by Colleen Fulmer

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**Second Reading:** Acts 2:16-18

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

In the days to come - says our God -
I will pour out my spirit on all humankind
Your children of all genders shall prophesy
Your youth shall see visions;
your elders shall dream dreams.
Yes, the Holy Spirit shall come upon all my servants-
Women, men, people of all genders -
and they shall prophesy.

*Hear what the Spirit Sophia is saying to Her people.*

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation:**
"Alleluia, Raise the Gospel" by Bernadette Farrell

**Gospel:** Luke 1:46-55 (Magnificat, Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary translation)


My soul proclaims Your greatness, O God.
My spirit rejoices in You who make me whole.

"Is it time, in the International Women’s Year, to raise the question of ordination for women in the Roman Catholic Church?" — Mary B. Lynch, Chicago, 1974

“We convene this Conference as an act of faith, hope and love in you and in the community of the people of God… Touch each of us, enable us to speak with your will written on our hearts and our minds, so that we may joyfully and fearlessly speak the prophecy.” — Detroit 1975, Liturgy of Invocation by Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt, co-founder of WOC

For You have looked with favor upon me despite my insignificance.
Amazingly, from now on, all generations will call me blessed.

“One of the other parts of the story of Joshua is that after the people took the city of Jericho, Yahweh said to them, “Never build in this palace again, a city like this.” So if you go through the walls and you take the city, then don’t build the same city again.” — M. Shawn Copeland, OP, Black Sisters Response, Detroit WOC Conference 1975

You, O God, have done great things for me
and holy is Your name.

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“If the church ended gender discrimination and proclaimed the equality of all human beings loud and clear, it would send a message to the world that would reverberate across oceans.” — Maureen Fiedler

You extend mercy and compassion from age to age to all those who hold You in awe.

"We don't have to acquiesce to oppressive and violent relationships as the unchangeable order of things either for the church, for American society or the global world. Against all odds, we can continue to stand up for an alternative, more life-giving, more redemptive way of being in relation to one another as people of God/ess, as people of love and justice, as people who remember the vision of our brother Jesus who preached good news to the poor, the liberation of the captives, the setting at liberty of those who are oppressed." — Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Church as Liberation Community from Patriarchy: The Praxis of Ministry as Discipleship of Equals,” Ottawa, 2005

You have shown Your sacred strength,

“La vida es la lucha.” — Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, co-founder of WOC in 1978, Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century

“The radical generation of black sisters who came of age during America’s civil rights and black power years left us a revolutionary blueprint on how to confront racism and sexism in the Church and demand meaningful change in our world. I challenge the teaching body of the Church to finally use it.” — Dr. Shannen Dee Williams, “Dear U.S. Catholic Theologians: The Lives of Black Women and Girls Always Matter,” December 13, 2014

dispersing the arrogant of mind and heart, casting rulers from their thrones and lifting up the lowly;

"I have come to a conviction that anything less than all women in the Catholic community having the possibility of being in all ministries of our church is not only a deficit, not only wrong; it is a scandal to our church and to our world.” — Theresa Kane, RSM, Message to Pope Francis in Philadelphia, September 18, 2015

filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty.

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“The people need more prophets of equality, not more pretenders to a priesthood of male privilege. They need discipleship, not canonical decrees.” — Joan Chittister, OSB, “Discipleship for a Priestly People in a Priestless Period,” Dublin WOW Conference, 2001

You have come to the aid of Your servant Israel, mindful of Your mercy and the promise You made to our ancestors, to Sarah and Abraham and their descendants forever.

“The truth is women should be priests and we should be unafraid to say so, because it is simply the just and right thing to do.” — Jamie Manson, “I got a glimpse of the future of women deacons, and it's troubling”, NCR Jan 25, 2019

The Gospel of Our God and the Wisdom of our Beloved Community.

All: Praise to you, Jesus the Christ.

Reflection from Mari Soco Castañeda

Prayers of the People
Response: Persistent Spirit, hear our prayer.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Eucharistic Prayer
Acclamation: “Holy, O Holy, Wisdom Sophia, the power and presence of God.”

Blessing Song: Sung by Marsie Silvestro, National Coordinator of WOC, 1980-1984

Closing Prayer
Ruah, breath of life, Breathe your love into the upper rooms in which we are all gathered And send us your gifts of peace and of boldness. Instill in us a spirit of endurance Knowing that the journey is long, but never without companionship. Grant us the ability to not just wait, but persist, in readiness and in growing joy. We ask this of you in gratitude, our Many-Named, Mysterious God. Amen.

Closing Song: "Sister, Carry On" by Carolyn McDade

Ritual of Anointing