

WATAC NEWS



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PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the May issue of *WATAC News*!

The Annual General Meeting for 2023 was scheduled for Saturday 4 March. A group met on that day and life memberships were awarded to Margaret Day and Anne Byrne. Congratulations to both Marg and Anne! We also revisited Rosemary Breen's life membership which was awarded last year but due to human and technical glitches she missed the presentation. Our guest speaker was Natalia Teguhputri, a young economist who participated in the *Economy of Francisco*, an initiative to involve young Catholics in implementing Gospel inspired social change.

Unfortunately, we did not have the required quorum of 30 members in attendance, so we had to reconvene the AGM to officially accept reports and to confirm the election of the new committee. This took place on 12 April. The committee members and office bearers are Andrea Dean (President), Rachel McLean (Vice President), Laraine Jeffs (Secretary), Karyn Green (Treasurer), Cathy Corbitt, Margaret Keyes (Pastoral Care), Danielle Lynch, Tracy McEwan, Philippa Wicksey and Sue Wittenoom. I congratulate all the committee members and thank them for their willingness to support WATAC with their generous service.

On a personal and tragic note, I ask you to remember in prayer, Mike Lynch, the husband of Danielle Lynch, and all who mourn his passing. Mike died on 22nd March 2023 after suffering

with aggressive brain cancer for 6 months. WATAC extends our deepest sympathy to Danielle who will be known to you through her work as Secretary, her facilitation of Zoom sessions, as well as her theme music and preaching for Australian Women Preach.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, please save the date, 13-15 October 2023. WATAC is in negotiation with Australian Collaborators in Feminist Theologies to hold a joint conference at Pilgrim College, University of Melbourne.

The Australian Women Preach team launched *In Her Voice*, a collection of reflections based on some of the homilies shared over the past two years, published by Garratt Publishing. I would encourage you to buy the book, available at the special launch price of \$25 until June.

Perhaps you have heard about the *International Survey of Catholic Women*? Dr Kathleen McPhillips and Dr Tracy McEwan, both WATAC members, were the lead researchers. An article is included in this issue and join us online next Wednesday 10th May at 7pm for a Webinar with the research team to hear more about the findings. Congratulations Kath and Tracy on this ground-breaking research!

Blessings,



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CATHOLIC WOMEN’S CRIES FOR CHANGE TO BE HEARD AT THE VATICAN ON IWD

The most extensive global survey of Catholic women ever undertaken, detailing experiences of women in the church, will be presented by Australian researchers in-person at the Vatican this International Women’s Day.



Dr Kathleen McPhillips and Dr Tracy McEwan.

The newly published [International Survey of Catholic Women](#) (ISCW) comprises more than 17,000 responses from participants across 104 countries.

Led by Drs Tracy McEwan and Kathleen McPhillips from the College of Human and Social Futures at the University of Newcastle, Australia, the report details 20 key findings and

further presents 14 key recommendations from the responses.

“The survey captured the complex diversity, insights, and shared concerns of thousands of Catholic women from around the world,” Dr McEwan explained.

“We asked about identity, views on church reform and various issues impacting women, including women in church leadership and sexual abuse, among many other things.

“We found even when women have considerable struggles with Catholic institutions, nearly 90 per cent said their Catholic identity is important to them. Many continue to practise their faith despite significant concern, frustration and dissatisfaction with the institutional church,” she said.

The survey was initiated by the international organisation [Catholic Women Speak](#) in response to Pope Francis’ invitation for submissions to the 2021-2023 Synod of Bishops – a process to examine how the church comes together to address major issues facing the church.

Catholic Women Speak invited the research team at the University of Newcastle, along with Professor Emeritus Tina Beattie from Roehampton University UK, to devise and run the survey and submit a report to the Vatican. The ISCW is a significant contribution to this process, providing substantial information from Catholic women across the world.

The work has already had global impact, capturing the attention of senior Vatican officials

working on the Synod content and prompting an invitation for the team to present the findings in-person.

“The overwhelming response we’ve had is a clear indicator of just how silenced Catholic women have felt,” Dr McEwan said.

Comprising quantitative and qualitative data, the survey included open-ended questions, which resulted in some significant insights.

One Australian responder commented:

‘Being a woman in the Church is hard - we walk the line of being valuable members of society but voiceless in many elements of the Church. I am trying to find the path of being a modern woman and someone who fits within the role available.’

Another in the UK wrote:

‘I cling on to the Church by my fingernails, because of the Eucharist and in spite of many of its clergy.’

“These are just two of the thousands of powerful statements we received,” Dr McEwan explained.

“Another fascinating insight is the stark responses between older and younger generations – and not in the way you might think.

“For example, we found many of those aged over 70 strongly supported same sex marriage, and the homily being preached by women, whereas support numbers were much smaller in the 18-40 age group,” she said.

Respondents participated from Europe, Canada, USA, South America, the Pacific, Africa, Southeast Asia and Australia, among other locations.

“More research is needed to explore what this actually means for the future of the Catholic Church in these regions,” [Dr McPhillips](#) explained.

Harnessing the data, the research team has developed recommendations to inform lasting and genuine change in church institutions, theology, and pastoral practices.

“The volume of women engaging in the ISCW reflects their shared concerns on the current state of church culture and gender politics. We have thousands of Catholic women calling for genuine change here,” Dr McPhillips said.

Based on the survey findings, the team has made a series of recommendations, including:

Greater access for women to meaningful pastoral and organisational leadership, including the ordination of women; enacting guidelines to eliminate sexual, spiritual and physical violence; requirements around reporting perpetrators to authorities; addressing corruption and economic mismanagement by putting in place transparent and accountable decision-making and management practices; ensuring Catholic social teaching addresses poverty, climate change, homelessness, war, and economic injustice.

The Catholic Church is Australia’s principal non-government provider of healthcare, education, and welfare. It employs almost two per cent of the Australian workforce and represents the 20 per cent of the Australian population who identify as Catholic.

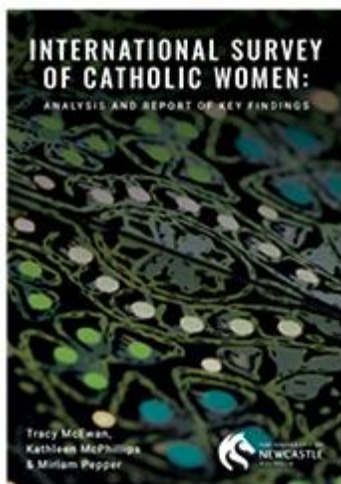
“This work matters to everyone. The Catholic Church is present in so many areas of Australian life, including social policy, and we should all be paying attention,” Dr McPhillips added.

“We have been given the opportunity to voice our recommendations at the institution’s most significant forum. We just hope they’re open to listening and implementing the change its members are so clearly crying out for.”

This article was originally published by [University News](#) Monday, 6 March 2023.



International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW) Webinar



Researchers **Dr Tracy McEwan**, **Dr Kathleen McPhillips**, and **Professor Tina Beattie** in dialogue with **Jacqui Rémond** will report on key findings and recommendations and explore how the ISCW captured the complex diversity, insights, and shared concerns of thousands of Catholic women from around the world.

Date: Wednesday 10 May 2023 Time: 7.00pm (AEST)*

Online registration is essential via [WATAC Homepage](#)

Zoom meeting details will be forwarded on Tuesday 9 May 2023

WHAT CATHOLIC WOMEN NEED TO HEAR FROM POPE FRANCIS—AND WHAT THEY DON'T

Last November, I had the opportunity to sit with Pope Francis in his home and ask him about women's ordination. In a church that has historically tended to limit such conversations, this felt, to me, like progress—not for a particular cause, but rather toward a church that is increasingly open to questions. The synod process has highlighted this, as well as the heightened emotions and tensions that can result.

Francis' style of leadership has taken some getting used to. He has made some bold moves in his papacy, but he started with many small ones that sent a big message: the carrying of a suitcase, the name Francis, the bus rides, the personal phone calls. It was easy to feel, early in his papacy, that whatever your politics or liturgical leanings, he was going to be “my” kind of pope. (In December 2013, just months into his papacy, Francis' approval rating among American Catholics was 92 percent.)

But Pope Francis has his own way of doing things, and his own pace. He also seems to feel more free to speak off the cuff, whether on the papal plane or from the pulpit. There is beauty in this, but it can be messy, too.

Over the last 10 years many Catholics likely have had a moment in which they thought: Wait, maybe I got Francis wrong. Maybe he is a misogynist/liberal/conservative/Marxist/capitalist after all. Perhaps especially on the topic of women, Francis has offered some mixed signals. The man who famously called women “strawberries on a cake,” derided “old maids” and “spinsters,” and made jokes about mothers-in-law has also said a woman's right to maternity leave “must be protected,” decried female genital mutilation and said that “every time a woman comes to do a job at the Vatican it gets better.”

I recently participated in a panel discussion about Francis' anniversary. During that discussion, Catherine Pepinster, the Catholic commentator and former editor of *The Tablet*, summed up the frustration many Catholic women I know have expressed. She praised Francis for his emphasis on ecology and attention to refugees, but on the matter of women in the church, she argued that adding women to the curia was not enough. “Do we just have to accept that he is an elderly Argentinian gent, who is not going to change his ways...or is it because he thinks that the church isn't ready to develop further, and he would like it to, but he just doesn't think this is the moment? And if so, when is the moment?”

In response, a fellow panellist, Anna Rowlands, professor of Catholic social thought at Durham University, pointed out that Francis, like each of us, contain multitudes: “The truth is [the Catholic Church] remains a significantly patriarchal institution...and many of Pope Francis’ own comments sometimes on women are fairly essentialising, and some would find them patronising. He is a man of his culture and age, but I don’t think we can overlook the fact that there is genuine material progress in terms of the inclusion of women in governance roles within the Vatican.” She also noted that he is the first pope to request that his encyclicals be produced in inclusive language. “It’s imperfect, and it’s a tale of two cities,” Rowlands said. “But we need to pay attention to both sides of that.”

As Kate McElwee, executive director of the Women’s Ordination Conference, wrote recently in the *National Catholic Reporter*, “Francis has modelled leadership that listens. While not the fireworks of change that many pray for, nor the revolution that women need, it is movement.” I hope that we continue to move toward a church community in which it is both less relevant that I am a woman—and more interesting because of it.

And in a church that counts time in centuries, movement, even slow movement, in a spirit-led direction is good. And as the synod progresses, it is crucial that we move closer to being a church that allows people to ask questions, and that we truly listen to one another’s answers. This will allow us to think more deeply about who we are as a church. To think more about who we are willing to acknowledge as part of the church. To think about being filled with less rage and more with persistent resolve.

When I spoke with Pope Francis, I began by saying, “Holy Father, as you know, women have contributed and can contribute much to the life of the church. You have appointed many women at the Vatican, which is great.” And at these statements, he gave a little cheer of sorts and smiled and raised his fist in a kind of solidarity. His cheer was warranted and, I think, genuine. Under his direction, the percentage of women working at the Vatican has risen from 19.3 percent to 23.4 percent, according to *Vatican News* statistics.

And I am heartened by the persistence of these women in the face of resistance to these changes. Maria Lia Zervino, President of the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations, was appointed to the Vatican’s Dicastery of Bishops last year. She recently told *The Washington Post* that, despite the resistance she faces, “there is no possibility of going back” to the days before Francis opened these roles to women.

Of course, most Catholic women will not work in the Vatican, and the questions around the full participation of women in the church extend far beyond what happens in Rome. Recognising

women's pastoral needs is just as important as choosing who is in power.

When I asked Pope Francis what he would say to a woman who feels called to be a priest, his first response was that "it is a theological problem," and he gave a lengthy answer about the Petrine and Marian principles in the church. I did not expect the Pope to express support for women's ordination, but I was surprised that he didn't appear to hear the heart of the question, which was aimed at the pastoral: What do we do in response to this pain?

I am grateful to have had the chance to be in conversation with the Holy Father. But I am also learning to worry less about how the Pope sees me and focus more on how God sees me. I know many joyful, faithful Catholic women who are happy to be a part of the faith. But the church, whether through its doctrine or its disciples, has also caused many of these same women a great deal of heartache. Francis' synodal church is a step toward acknowledging this pain.

Dr. Rowlands pointed out that the synod process has resulted in many Catholics saying, "This is the first time in my life...where the church has genuinely wanted to hear about my experience and my views." And she emphasised "that absolutely has included an emphasis on women's experience and the failure to hear that." She said it isn't just a "looking-inwards question" regarding participation in the church, but it's also "a question about the socioeconomic realities of the lives that women are leading across the globe. And the capacity of the church to be active witnesses and accompany women in those contexts."

I believe that Francis wants to be an active witness to women's experience in the church and the world, and I believe he wants Catholic women to feel supported by the institutional church. "We have to tell the truth," the Pope said recently, "the fight for women's rights is an ongoing fight because in some places women have equality with men but in other places they do not." He was referring here to political and social equality within nations, but the statement works just as well for the church itself.

In the preface for a book titled *More Women's Leadership for a Better World*, Francis wrote, "I like to think that if women could enjoy full equality of opportunity, they could contribute substantially to the necessary change towards a world of peace, inclusion, solidarity and integral sustainability." I like to think so, too.

We have a way to go before our church reaches this kind of equality. But I refuse to allow my faith to stall until the Holy Father catches up to the Holy Spirit. I want a church that will offer a more equal place for women in leadership at all levels of the church, but I also know that every Catholic holds a responsibility to help make that happen.

There are few who hold more power over the future of the church than the mothers, the catechists, the teachers conveying the faith to children, through word and example. Women already hold countless roles in parishes and dioceses across the country, and the value of that work should not be overlooked in the name of focusing on “real” power at the Vatican.

The institutional church is never going to move at the pace I want it to on some issues. But part of the beauty of our church is that it is not about what I want. Ours is a church that seeks the common good, that calls people to communion. There are a million ways to live out the Gospel call—to justice, to love, to mercy—and the pope is meant to remind us of that call, over and over again. We are all asked to live the faith as authentically as possible, to look for examples of other people doing the same, and to encourage them along the way. Hopefully the synod process can help with this. I believe Pope Francis himself is a good example.

I did not expect the Pope to express support for women’s ordination, but I was surprised that he didn’t appear to hear the heart of the question, which was aimed at the pastoral: What do we do in response to this pain? But the pope—his existence, his personality, his priorities—whether it is Pope Francis or whoever comes after him, is never going to make everyone happy. Through the grace of God, he encourages us to be holy. But my understanding of my dignity, as a Catholic or as a woman, cannot hinge on his statements or affirmation.

I want to be a part of a church that does not assign me qualities based on my gender, but that acknowledges the gifts I bring because of who I am. I hope that we continue to move toward a church community in which it is both less relevant that I am a woman—and more interesting because of it.

I am grateful to have had the chance to be in conversation with the Holy Father. But I am also learning to worry less about how the Pope sees me and focus more on how God sees me. In doing so, I hope to help build a church in which the fact that I am a woman is not an obstacle to ministry and in which the fact that I am a woman is respected and seen. I want to be a part of a church that does not assign me qualities based on my gender, but that acknowledges the gifts I bring because of who I am. I hope that we continue to move toward a church community in which it is both less relevant that I am a woman—and more interesting because of it. That, too, would feel like progress.

This original article was written by Kerry Weber, and was published in [America](#) on 10th March 2023. Reprinted with permission.

JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN FAITH HOPE & LOVE

Recently four experienced pastoral associates, administrators and educationalists from SE Melbourne, Mary Cameron, Anne Hunt, Berna Wake and Frances North, came together to reflect on the Continental Stage Working Document (DCS), and in particular on the place of women in a Synodal Church. They agreed with Joan Chittister who wrote: “The notion that any psychologically, spiritually healthy human being, either male or female, will, in years to come, join in great numbers an organisation that is blatantly sexist is at best a psychedelic dream.” Frances North compiled their thoughts.

Watching Pope Benedict’s Funeral Mass while contemplating our response to the next phase of preparations for the coming Synod, we couldn’t help but wonder if liturgies like this affect peoples’ perception of the Catholic Church. You watch a sea of old men dressed in red, Church leaders and decision-makers who are far removed from the ordinary faithful, and their lives. Is this the Church that calls us to fulfil our mission to evangelise the world?

Jesus encountered people wherever they were and whatever their circumstances. He initiated a Kingdom, not a church. The Church – and that is all of us, not just the hierarchy - exists to serve the Kingdom. Serving the Kingdom means that we are a Church for the wounded, the lost and the marginalised.

The synodal journey

In 2023/2024 bishops will convene at the Vatican for a synod on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” In promoting the Synod, Pope Francis defines Synodality as “the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” With an emphasis on listening to the entirety of the faithful, the Synod has the potential to reform the culture and reshape the power dynamics in the Church.

As the People of God on this synodal journey we have been invited to a time of shared discernment, aided by the Holy Spirit, to listen with open hearts and minds, to see with a disciple’s eyes, and to discern what steps to take to grow as a synodal Church. Our participation in the consultative phase of the Synod has provided an opportunity to voice concerns, hopes and dreams, and to be listened to, for which we and many who have participated have greatly appreciated.

The call for a conversion of Church culture

We are excited by the call for a conversion of the Church’s culture and the possibility of establishing a new culture, with new practices and structures: a culture of servant leadership

and a clear vision of the future; a Church where all are welcome, each and every one recognised as a beloved child of God, and accorded the dignity that is their due; a Church that listens and acts; a Church for Mission.

A critical and urgent area in regard to cultural change concerns the role of women in the Church and the hierarchical structures that have in many ways limited the influence of lay people and especially women. Amid Pope Francis' many attempts to reform those structures has been his appointment of Sr. Nathalie Becquart, a French Religious Sister of the Congregation of Xavieres, to the role of undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, making her the first woman with a right to vote during the synod of bishops, a right traditionally reserved for ordained men. Becquart comments on the significance of her role: "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 the disconnect between the exercise of leadership from ordination. I am an example of that."

The role of women in the Church as an issue in the *Australian Synthesis*

In the Local/National consultative phases of the synodal journey, diverse groups and people from across Australia (and similarly across the globe) were invited to reflect and provide input into the synodal journey, with the reports on those listening sessions then synthesised to produce the *Australian Synthesis*.

Many people in parishes and dioceses noted that the limitations on the role of women in leadership constituted an obstacle to greater synodality and this issue needed urgent attention. Many participants called for women, as baptised members of the Church, to be accepted as equal to men and "for their talents, experiences and abilities to be recognised and used at all levels of the Church." They called for equal, just and full participation of women in Church governance, mission and ministry which, for some groups, meant recognising their admissibility to any role, such as deacon, priest, or representative on decision-making councils. Participants believed that the principles of synodality could be strengthened by including the laity as equal leaders.

A greater priority than the ordination of men – or women – in such a rethinking of Church leadership was the formation of individuals as leaders dedicated to God's Word, who could facilitate dialogue, were trained to listen and discern, and were appointed to serve rather than assuming power over others. Participants also agreed that issues such as clericalism could be addressed by educating clergy and laity about the importance of accountability, transparency and dialogue, as well as strengthening seminary formation, and including the role of women in

that process. One group noted that the Synod prompted a “re-awakening of the laity” and a “change in the mindset of the clergy” for “better listening, deeper dialogue and enthusiastic collaboration.”

Numerous groups noted that the continued exclusion of women from the permanent diaconate and ordained ministry and from some Church governance and structures was “disempowering” and resulted in the loss of their charisms and gifts.

The role of women in the Church as a *global* issue

In preparation for what is called the Continental Phase of the Synodal journey, the recently released *Working Document for the Continental Stage* (DCS) synthesises hundreds of reports from the Synod’s consultative phase. The content is detailed and open: nothing has been excluded. DCS notes that some reports call for priestly ordination for women, while others consider it a closed issue, what is striking is that DCS highlights that, from across all *continents*, comes an appeal for Catholic women to be valued first and foremost as baptised and equal members of the People of God, entitled to full and active participation. DCS notes that women love the Church deeply and are the backbone of Church communities, both because they represent the majority of practising members and are among the most active members. Yet their contribution is seriously limited, and they are often excluded from key decision-making processes. Most Church governance roles are held by men. The lack of equality for women within the Church is seen as a stumbling block for the Church in the modern world. DCS also notes that many reports ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a set of specific questions in regard to women and their roles: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, a female diaconate and the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in Parish settings.

What would Jesus think?

As we ponder DCS and its summary of responses from across the world, we wonder what Jesus would think. In Luke’s Gospel we see Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary. Martha complains that she is doing the bulk of the work in the kitchen while Mary sits at Jesus’ feet. Jesus replies “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part.” (Luke 10:41) As far as Jesus was concerned a woman’s role should not be confined to housework and incidentals. Part of the disciple’s role is to listen and learn.

Jesus valued women and included them in his ministry. The first preacher of the Good News

we come across in John's Gospel is the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well (John 4:28- 29). Jesus allowed Mary Magdalen, Joanna and Mary the mother of James to be the first witnesses to the Resurrection (Luke 24:2).

Living in hope

Women seek genuinely full and equal partnership with the Church in every area of their lives. They also recognise the strength that flows from working together to protect the vulnerable, feed the hungry, be a voice for the voiceless, and empower people to flourish. How depleted would the Church be without women's full participation?

We also wonder about our children, grandchildren, and the generations to come. Will they want to belong and participate in a church that doesn't provide for, and respect, women's full and equal participation? We agree with Joan Chittister who writes: "The notion that any psychologically, spiritually healthy human being either male or female will, in years to come, join in great numbers an organisation that is blatantly sexist is at best a psychedelic dream."

The DCS document makes us rejoice that responses from all over the world have been comprehensively documented in the consultative phases and have emerged in the DCS for the next stage of the synodal journey. This itself is an important development. There is an accountability to history that comes from committing these reports to print.

As the next phase of synodal listening and discerning proceeds, the possibility that this can lead to something transformative fills us with hope.

This article was written by Frances North and published in the [The Swag](#), National Council of Priests, Autumn 2023. Reprinted with permission.



Edmund Rice Centre Statement in Support for A Voice to Parliament

"The Edmund Rice Centre stands ready to support the together YES campaign for recognition of our First Nations peoples in our Constitution. We also stand ready to support the establishment of a Voice to Parliament, a mechanism for truth telling, treaty and the many other important recommendations of the Uluru Statement from the Heart which we as a Centre support the full implementation of without compromise. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Owners of Country we share and agree that sovereignty was never ceded. To this end we provide the following to help our friends and supporters take this journey with us as we head towards a new beginning."

[TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE YES CAMPAIGN](#)

[ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART DISCUSSION RESOURCE KIT](#)

[ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART RESOURCE KIT FOR TEACHERS](#)

#YesfromtheHeart

CATHOLICCARE BOARD MEMBER NAMED NSW WOMAN OF THE YEAR



CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes board member Lynda Edwards has been named the 2023 New South Wales Woman of the Year.

Ms Edwards was also named NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year at the NSW Women of the Year Awards presentation in Sydney last week.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes chief Anne-Marie Mioche said the organisation was thrilled the important work of Ms Edwards had been recognised on the state stage.

“Lynda, a proud Wangkumara and Barkandji woman, is a dedicated advocate for First Nations people in the financial sector,” Ms Mioche said.

“Her work has contributed significantly to fairer financial outcomes for First Nations people.

“Her valuable contribution to our community in western NSW also includes serving in the voluntary role of director of the CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes board.”

Ms Edwards has worked for almost 17 years in the financial sector, sharing her expertise of the sector to educate and increase the financial literacy of the First Nations community.

Prior to this, she was an Aboriginal Liaison Officer with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer within the NSW Police Force.

She then spent 11 years as a finance officer with her local council which led to her joining CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes as an Aboriginal Financial Literacy Worker with the “Manage Your Income” Program – a project she would later head up for more than nine years.

Ms Edwards’ work with CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes and Financial Counselling Australia has been pivotal in leading campaigns calling out unethical sales tactics and building financial health across the region.

This news piece was published in [Catholic News](#) on March 16, 2023. Reprinted with permission.

LISTENING TO SCRIPTURE

'Vindicate me, O God. And plead my cause against an ungodly nation.' (Psalm 43:1)

I have pondered that passage this year. Especially this year, as we prepare for a referendum on whether my people – First Nations people – should have a Voice in the Constitution. On face value it is a purely bureaucratic reform. The proposal is that Indigenous people should have a representative body to advise parliament on policy directed toward us.

Put that way it sounds procedural. Bloodless. Anaemic. The Constitution is a purely functional document. It is Australia's rule book. There is nothing sacred in the Constitution. Indeed, it is the antithesis of the sacred. Remember the words of Christ. *"Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God."* The Constitution is Caesar's work. We give to it what is demanded of us. We stop at traffic lights, and we pay our taxes.

But surely the Voice is something more. It calls us to become right with God.

We must face the harsh judgment of God. We have to atone. We must confront that question: are we an ungodly nation? We are not a Godless nation. We are not a nation without God. We are not a nation of people who do not seek God. But yes, we can indeed be judged an ungodly nation. That is what the scriptures tell us. *"Justice is far from us"* (Isaiah 59:9). *"We walk in darkness"* (Isaiah 59:9). Australia's history casts a long shadow.

We are a nation that has sought to erase my people from the Earth. Invaders carrying the gun and the bible massacred my people then locked us away on missions and reserves where it was expected we would die out. The Reverend Samuel Marsden, the eighteenth century colonial New South Wales Church of England chaplain, described Aboriginal people as "the most degraded of the human race...." He believed we were "irredeemable".

Marsden, like so many of the ruling invaders, believed he was on the side of God. But he could not see God when God was staring back at him through the eyes of my people. We knew God. My people the Wiradjuri had our own word for God: Baiame.

God did not arrive on the First Fleet. We lived with God, as God's people in the land God had given us. When the invaders killed us, they were killing God. When they stole from us, they stole from God.

God lives and dies in the afflicted. God died in the death camps of the Holocaust. God died in the Indian Wars of the American plains. God died with us in the frontier wars. God dies wherever God's children are persecuted and killed.

God died with Christ.

We come to God through many faiths. According to my faith the promise of the crucifixion is that we are not alone. We are not forsaken. And God lives with us in our struggle to live on.

When the missionaries came – as they saw it—to “civilise” us, or “Christianise” us, we read the Bible and we read the truth. We read the Gospel of John: “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*” (John 10:10)

Jesus came so that we – my people – would have life. He did not come to vindicate the thieves and murderers. God is on the side of justice. The scriptures tell us to “*follow justice and justice alone.*” (Deuteronomy 16:20) Psalm 89:14 says that righteousness and justice are the foundation of God’s throne.

Nations stray from justice. God is not on the side of unjust nations, however much nations may seek to claim God. As it says in Psalm 9:20: “*Strike them with terror, Lord; let the nations know they are only mortal.*”

Nations are not above God, and they are not above God’s judgment. Nations are judged for their sin. We know that. Luke says in 12:10 that to speak against the Son of man shall be forgiven but to speak against God will not be forgiven. This nation we now call Australia was founded by those claiming to speak God’s words, but who, in the worst that they did to my people, blasphemed against God. These are sins to last an eternity.

Jesus judges. He judges the rich and the powerful. Jesus chooses his side. And he is on the side of the suffering. He is on the side of justice. And his is a fierce judgment. “*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword*” (Matt. 10:34). What does that say to me? Not that Jesus comes to bring war, but to bring a mighty sword of justice. To strike at those in power and defend those afflicted. Time is no substitute for justice. Time will not heal all wounds. The sins are laid at our feet. In Luke 11:51 we are told that this generation will be held responsible for it all.

And yet in the face of suffering. There is hope. In the worst of our history, there is a promise. Injustice blackens the world, but “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*” (John 1:5) I was raised in the Aboriginal church, among men and women of God. We were steeped in our culture and our faith. They were indivisible.

The Aboriginal political struggle emerged out of the Church. It was driven by those who believed that we, like all people, are made in the image of God. We believed there was a light in the darkness.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a light in the darkness. The Voice emerges from the Uluru Statement. It is a gift from the First Peoples to all others on this land. It comes from a spiritual place. To me, the Uluru Statement is more profound than the Voice. The Voice speaks to politics, but the Uluru Statement speaks to the soul.

In many ways I have felt the political debate about the Voice has stripped the enchantment from the Uluru Statement. What were words of God have become the slogans of politics. Politics too often cheapens us. Worse, these things of Caesar take us farther from God.

The discussion about the Voice has been dominated by the voices of the powerful. Politicians and lawyers speak more loudly in this moment than the voices of the people of God. We are poorer for that. Jesus tells us in Luke 20:46: *“Beware of the teachers of the law”*. These are the people who seek credit. Who seek power. Who wear fine robes in the marketplace and occupy the best seats in the synagogue. I have no doubt that some of the lawyers and politicians advocating for the Voice are filled too with God’s love. Yet it is a mighty task to wrest back God from the Caesar.

As I follow this debate, too often I find myself feeling deflated, dispirited. I look for words of righteousness and justice and I hear, sadly, political platitudes, marketing campaigns crafted in strategy meetings. I want to believe that is indeed a moment when we can see *“justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream”* (Amos 5:24), but I am reminded that the Voice is a “modest” proposal. This is what we are reduced to.

We are told it will be a Voice “nothing more, nothing less”. But our people deserve more. Australia deserves more. There is politics and then there is justice. The Voice must be a voice of justice. It will not be silenced. Surely this is a moment to lift the nation’s sight. There is no greater purpose than the fight for the nation’s soul. We cannot betray the divine purpose of the Voice. The Voice finds itself hemmed in by the twin existential crises of our time: the loss of faith and the decadence of liberal democracy.

The Voice appeals to representative politics at a time when the democratic world is questioning whether old-school liberalism can possibly answer the questions of a crowded, contested, globalised twenty-first century world. An obscene wealth gap, racism, misogyny, homophobia, gender inequality and elite capture contribute to shattering liberalism’s illusions of fairness, freedom and equality. Liberal democracies are fractured and fragmented. Public discourse is poisoned by a winner-takes-all culture war.

A wave of political populism has swept opportunists, demagogues and despots into power, all

of them preying on fear and anxiety, each promising a return to some imagined glorious past. Each pledging to make their countries great again. There is a loss of trust in the institutions of society. In Australia there have been Royal Commissions into aged care, banking and the church. Yes. Churches are also complicit in this hollowing out of belief, trust and hope.

In the West religion is in retreat. Churches are cause of scandal. Its leadership too often appearing aloof, judgmental, and uncaring. According to the last census nearly forty percent of Australians have no religion. Fewer than forty four percent now say they are Christian.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart seeks to bridge that divide between God – the spirit – and politics. Yet it does so at a time when both faith and politics are being driven to the margins. The Voice seeks justice via the institutions of democracy when those institutions appear tawdry. The risk for the Voice is that it is captured and doomed by the very liberalism that it seeks to redeem.

I want to reach for something more. I want to reach for God in this moment. This nation faces a reckoning with truth and I believe a reckoning with God. As Isaiah 59:14 warns: *“Justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Our courts oppose the righteous, and justice is nowhere....”*

Words like reconciliation and recognition, are hollowed out by politics. Those words are not big enough to carry the weight of our demands for justice. Instead, I turn to affliction. The French philosopher and Christian mystic, Simone Weil, has taught me of the truth of affliction. It is more than suffering. It is the cold touch of fate. Affliction she said “is anonymous. It deprives the victims of their personality and turns them into things.”

Surely my people felt the cold touch of fate with the invasion of the colonisers. We were stripped of who we were. Deemed barely human. Affliction Weil said, “is the chill of indifference”. It is “the metallic chill that freezes all those it touches down to the depths of their soul.”

Simone Weil has spoken to me more profoundly this year than any politician or lawyer. She died when she was just in her thirties. But her words are eternal. She said she felt the presence of Jesus Christ enter her soul. It was, she said, as real to her as the smile of a friend.

This year I have turned away from politics and turned towards God. I have felt the presence of Simone Weil as a friend and the presence – the very real felt presence – of Christ. I have had to contemplate the apparent callousness of God. Where is God in my people’s suffering? How could God allow such things to happen? But I find that it is in God’s absence that God lives. It



is in the fact that the world is imperfect and at times evil that God can be revealed.

For what would God mean in a world of perfection? These are the things Simone Weil contemplated. God may leave the world, but God leaves the trace of love. In that love we can find God. Affliction alone has no significance, Weil said. But in our affliction, we endure. We wait. This is for me the power of the Voice. It is the voice of those afflicted. It is the voicelessness of those who wait.

The people of this age may be turning away from politics and abandoning religion. But they are not abandoning the divine. We seek the divine everywhere. In a sunset, in music, in art, in birdsong and the touch of each other. We seek it in love.

The Voice must also be the voice of the divine. My people – Wiradjuri – have a word: Yindyamarra. It means to respect; to be gentle, to speak quietly and walk softly. It is a theology. It is captured in Micah 6:8: “*And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*” The Uluru Statement was an invitation to walk together for a better future; to walk humbly with God. The Voice must not lose the trace of the divine. Politics has its place, but we must speak of God too in this moment.

I pray for God’s touch to fill with courage the hearts of those fighting for justice. I pray that Australians can truly see us as they never have, to see in us God’s love. Because the First Nations – people of God in the land God gave us – offers a way to bring the nation closer to God. Closer to justice. We cannot look only to the law or politics for the justice we seek. Christ was judged by law and died at the hands of law, but he died and rose to free us from earthly law. Laws change, nations fall, but love and justice are eternal.

“For if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.” (Gal. 2:21)

This article was written by Professor Stan Grant and was first published by the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in the Easter edition of [Engage](#).
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WE ARE ONE

There will not be justice until each person is satisfied being any person in the world, in any situation, anywhere.

Elizabeth A. Johnson, Abounding in Kindness

THE MEDITATION

Browse the daily news to find a story of a disenfranchised person, someone who has been forced to the outer edges of society by some type of poverty and exclusion – or select someone from the following list of people on the margins:

a political prisoner sentenced to thirty years' hard labour.

a middle-aged man addicted to opioids.

a blind woman begging on a crowded street.

a ten-year-old boy soldier with a rebel group.

a person with a mental illness who has no financial income.

a six-year-old orphan in one of the world's largest slums.

a prostitute whose pimp beats her.

a homeless alcoholic lying in an alleyway.

a widow who has lived for ten years in a refugee camp.

a family living amid the rubble of a bombed village.

This reflection offers a way to enter the life of someone on the margins of society when the opportunity to meet in person is not possible. This meditation provides a way to engender empathy and let go of stereotypes that keep compassion locked out.

As you begin to imagine how it might be to live as the particular person you have selected, first set an intention to put aside your personal judgments and biases about him or her. Pause to open your mind and heart to the compassionate Spirit of Jesus. Pray that you will get to know the marginalised person you selected with the kindness that he manifested when marginalised people came to him.

Now, try to picture this person at a certain age. Become him or her as fully as you can. Get to know their physical, external appearance: What do you look like? What ethnicity are you? What kind of clothes are you wearing; do they need washing or mending? Do you also sleep in those clothes? Do you have more than one set of clothing?

Imagine what a typical day is like for you. Where do you wake up? Are you rested? What happens when you wake up? What do you hear? Do you wake up to quiet, to noise, to yelling, to confusion or fear? Do you have a routine or is the morning chaotic? What is the place like

where you have been sleeping? Is it cluttered, dirty, or clean? What do you see around you? Do you have furniture? Pictures on the walls? What do you smell? Is the odour pleasant, repugnant, harmful? Are there insects or rodents in your place?

How does your body feel? Is there pain in some part of your physical self? If so, what is the cause of it? Do you have the means to take care of it, to try to lessen the pain or the discomfort? Do you have water? If so, what is the source of it? Is the water clean? Are you limited in how much water you can use? Are you able to brush your teeth? Can you go to the toilet in private? Is there any place to bathe? Are you physically able to wash yourself or does someone have to help you?

Imagine what you, as this person, are thinking and feeling about your life at this moment. Do you have hope? Are you discouraged? Despairing? Is there anything that brings you joy?

If you go to work, what kind of job do you have? What are the physical conditions like? Are they safe and humane? Does your job pay a just wage? Do you have access to healthcare? How are you treated at work? How many hours do you have to work?

Now, move to the end of the day. Look back and review what the day has been like for you. What time is it when you can finally pause and have time for yourself? How do you feel? Exhausted, lonely, scared, angry, hurt, worried, vulnerable? What are your last thoughts before going to sleep?

If you had one message you could give people who live better lives than you do, what would you say to them?

Close your meditation with the following prayer, or one of your own.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Holy One, your love unites all of us who live on this planet. We are truly sisters and brothers, joined in spirit through your abiding presence. Gather to your heart all the people who live in situations like the person I momentarily became. Enfold all those on the edge of society in your heart of compassion. Guide me to find and enter into actions that will help relieve the burdens of those who are oppressed. Thank you for the immensity of your love.

As an extension of this meditation, at the close you might have the person whose life you entered write a letter to you about his or her situation.

This prayer was written by Joyce Rupp and can be found in her book, *Prayer of Boundless Compassion*, SunCreek Books (2018) pp. 50-53. Accessed on the website of [Spirituality and Practice](#). Reprinted with permission.



in her voice

RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES
IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL

Australian Women Preach

In late 2020, some women dared to dream, 'Could we create a podcast of Australian women preaching?'

After an initial conversation, they reached out to *Women and the Australian Church* (WATAC) and *The Grail Australia*. A small diverse group of Christian women gathered and the team behind *Australian Women Preach* (AWP) podcast was born.

The *Australian Women Preach* weekly podcast features Australian women preaching the Sunday Gospel. The subsequent book – *In Her Voice* – was created using a selection of reflections from the podcast by 30 women preachers of diverse Christian faith and ages.

In Her Voice seeks to raise women's voices and highlight the preaching talent of women. The broad group of writers all share a knowledge and love of the Gospel, and a Spirit-driven desire to preach. It also includes a *Welcome to Country* from Auntie Di Langham, Director of Reconciliation for the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

In Her Voice is a unique Australian book that showcases the often unheard voices of Christian women. It is powerful and enlightening.

AUSTRALIAN
**WOMEN
PREACH**

An initiative of WATAC (Women and the Australian Church) and The Grail in Australia, the *Australian Women*

Preach Podcast showcases preaching by Christian women from across all denominations, relevant to contemporary Australia. Its aim is to enrich and renew the experience of the Sunday Gospel by highlighting talented Christian women preaching the Gospel. Each presenter provides their own theological insight that is relevant to daily life.

For more information about *Australian Women Preach* scan here or visit:



www.australianwomenpreach.com.au

...Each reflection highlights the critical insights that women's wisdom and experiences bring to preaching the gospel. It is my hope that In Her Voice, alongside the Australian Women Preach podcast, will play some part in correcting the current inaction regarding the marginalisation of women in Australian churches.

Dr Tracy McEwan
Vice-president of WATAC Inc
Co-convenor of the
Australian Women Preach Team

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TOO MUCH WISDOM IS NEVER ENOUGH?

If you search google images for ‘Mary, Martha and Jesus’, you will be overwhelmed by the results, ranging from traditional, usually quite sombre, representations through to images that owe something to the world of cartoons.

Some aspects are standard: Martha is looking mildly (or very) displeased, often holding a pitcher or a dish; Jesus is the peacemaker (after all, it’s his meal that’s being prepared) and Mary is usually sitting at Jesus’ feet, all but oblivious to anything around her.

Of all those in the gospel who had the opportunity to listen to Jesus, ‘one on one’, including Mary his mother, I feel Mary of Bethany models what it is to be a disciple learning from the master. She saw the moment and grabbed it, eschewing the tasks Martha (for whom I have to confess a sneaking sympathy) has in mind.

Of course, Mary was blessed in many ways we 21st century disciples are not. Her ‘good news’ was straight from the source, unmitigated by translation or hermeneutics, social media or competing commentaries.

It’s a mixed blessing that in 2023, there are so many ‘ways in’ to the gospel, to faith, to worship that it can be confusing, even overwhelming.

For example, the internet is, to say the least, endlessly beckoning, endlessly fascinating and endlessly diverting! The digital world provides infinite opportunities to deepen one’s understanding and expand one’s reach.

One example will suffice: each week I receive an email from a friend-of-a-friend who convenes a prayer group in Brisbane. The email’s a prelude to the regular gathering which revolves around a broad theme – silence, light, forgiveness and so on.

The email includes prayers, poetry and quotations from a variety of sources, often with internet links and (e.g.) YouTube clips for music, short films, speakers and more. Sometimes there’s an attachment with more of the same. Much of what’s on offer speaks to me and makes me want to explore e.g. a poet’s canon, or further reflections from a wisdom person like Jan Richardson or Richard Rohr or Pdraig O’Tuama or John O’Donohue...

Then there’s the rabbit hole of links...to say the least, one thing leads to another!

And remember, all this is emanating from one newsletter...

Friends’ recommendations are another valuable source of inspiration. When I come across something that really speaks to me, I’m quick to share, perhaps to the occasional chagrin of my

over-emailed contacts!

Many of us subscribe to a variety of blogs, magazines and podcasts. Each of these is likely at times to be a gateway to other sources of wisdom, whether through music, film, fiction, memoir, online presentations and more. On my nightstand I have, as well as my current novel (Pip Williams' *The Bookseller of Jericho* – highly recommended) a variety of collections of poetry. I like to dip into and out of them because, while they're not specifically spiritual, they certainly feed my spirit. I'm thinking Rumi, Seamus Heaney and David Whyte, for starters...

Sometimes I teach adult groups or lead them in prayer, and I like to draw on a variety of contemporary resources to add a fresh dimension to the topic or occasion. But where to begin? Where to conclude?

Should breadth be abandoned for the sake of depth? For example, would it be wiser to make one's way, slowly, through one poetry anthology rather than dipping into many?

Do you ever feel overwhelmed, or do you take delight in all that is available to inspire, challenge and enrich your understanding of matters of the spirit?

Perhaps an embarrassment of riches one day is just what is needed the next?

Mary of Bethany probably had few, if any, opportunities to be educated and yet, unlike her sister, she knew exactly where she should be. She was 'in the moment' long before it was a thing.

St Paul wrote, "...we do speak a wisdom to those who are mature, but not a wisdom of this age... Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory..." (I Cor 2:6-7)

Recently at the Easter liturgies in our parish we sang, "Ancient types have long departed, newer rites of grace prevail..." There will, it seems to me, always be a rightful tension between the active and the contemplative, the ancient and the modern, the mature and the less mature.

Each of us, standing on the shoulders of our unique story, set against the larger landscape of faith, can only navigate all that's on offer, identify our own guru(s) and share the Good News.

And if it all becomes too much, we can always unsubscribe and return to the original source – the Word of God.

This original piece was written by Tracey Edstein for WATAC News, May 2023.

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‘WOMEN TALKING’ IS THE OSCAR NOMINEE EVERY CATHOLIC NEEDS TO SEE

The Oscar-nominated film “Women Talking” begins in a revelation of horror: The girls and women of a rural Mennonite community are being systematically drugged and raped in the night. The men of the community insist that their attackers are ghosts and demons, and as bizarre as that sounds, the women have accepted it. Then a child catches sight of one of the community’s men as he assaults a woman. Soon an entire group of men is arrested.

Rather than stand by their mothers, wives and daughters, the men of the community leave to bail the perpetrators out, telling the women they have two days to come around to forgiving their attackers for what they have done. As a group, the women must decide how to proceed - “forgive” (i.e., do nothing); stay and fight back; or leave the community forever.

If you are wondering why you haven’t heard about this incredible film, you are not alone. Since it was released in December, “Women Talking” has earned only \$4 million domestically; maybe 250,000 Americans have paid to see it. I guess it’s not surprising that people would be more interested in [Tom Cruise smiling](#) or [blue undersea C.G.I. aliens](#)...I don’t know, farming? But among this year’s Oscar nominees there is no more compelling film than “Women Talking,” nor any that wrestles more honestly with what it means to be a member of a faith community.

After setting up its story, “Women Talking” spends almost the entirety of its run time in a barn with the small group of women appointed to decide what the larger group should do. From a storytelling point of view, it’s a big swing. Cinema is a visual medium; 90 minutes of people sitting around talking does not sound like a formula for success. And yet the film’s writer/director, Sarah Polley, and this amazing cast, which includes Claire Foy, Jessie Buckley, Rooney Mara, Frances McDormand, Judith Ivey and Sheila McCarthy, use the constraints of the story to create a unique space of care.

As the group debates what to do, a number of the women end up sharing elements of their own experiences; and at their rawest moments, others silently come and sit with them or place a hand upon their shoulder. These actions never intrude on the character speaking. Instead, they somehow make more room for the speakers and their questions, their pain. It’s as though each person’s experiences have been pressed down within the characters into spaces far too small to contain them. The quiet presence of the women gives each speaker the permission to allow all of that out into the open. They can each be who they truly are, whether that is angry, ashamed

or damaged, and find themselves accepted and loved as such.

It is worth watching this film simply to watch that process unfold. It is one of the most profoundly Christian takes on community and friendship I have ever seen.

As much as their conversation is marked by the traumas they have been through, fundamentally what the women are wrestling with are questions of faith. They have spent their whole lives being taught to understand themselves as subservient to men, to accept the words of men as fact and their decisions as divinely inspired. They have also been taught that to reject their role in society will damn them literally to hell. How do you walk away from your community, violent though it may be, if the potential consequences are eternal torment—and not only for you but for your daughters?

“Women Talking” is an exploration of the way that religion can be used to imprison people—and what’s worse, to teach them to imprison themselves. In one of the most startling and yet genuine turns of the film, some of the women begin to wonder whether the men in their community can even be blamed for their actions. They, too, are trapped within the way of thinking they have been taught. These women are right, of course, but facing that fact when the consequences have been so damaging is also brutal. When you start confronting the truth of your reality, there’s just no telling where you’ll end up.

As different as the Mennonite community is from our own, our recent Catholic history, too, is filled with horrifying stories of communities of faith who were taught and groomed over many years to ignore the violence happening in their midst. The startling recent report about Jean Vanier, founder of the international network of residential communities for handicapped adults known as L’Arche, is a case in point. While widely viewed as a saint for his work with these communities, in secret Vanier was using L’Arche as a cover for the recreation of what seemed to be a “mystical sex” cult, and ended up sexually exploiting dozens of women over almost 60 years.

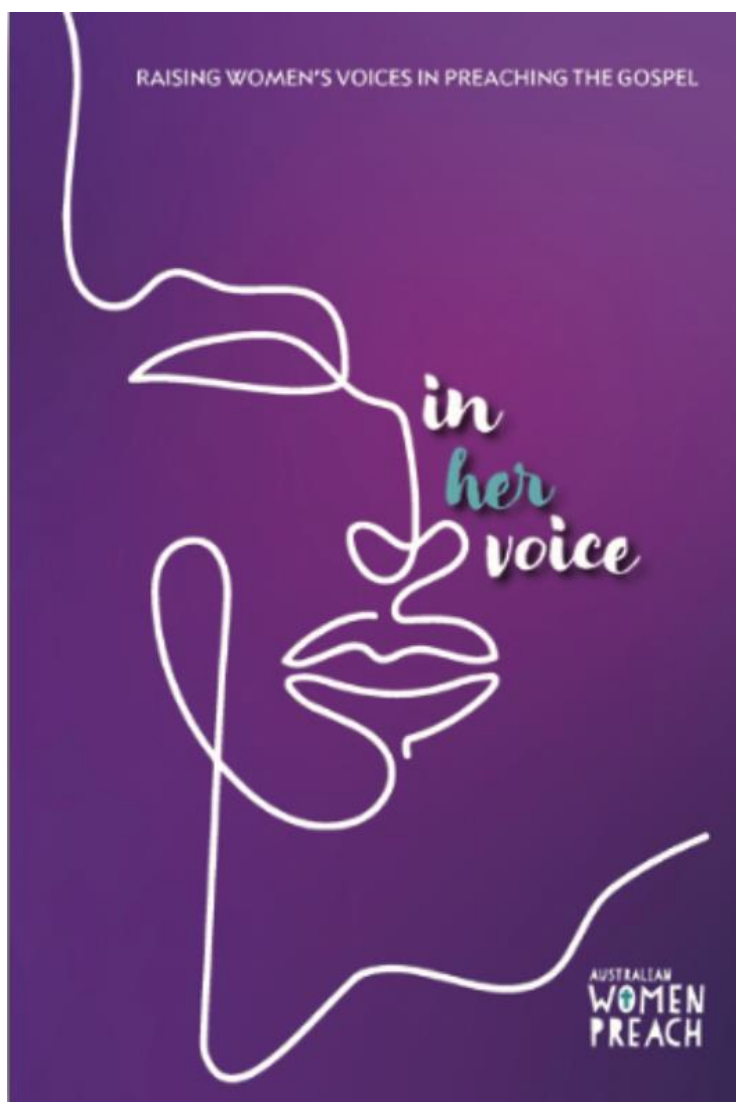
Is it truly possible that no one ever witnessed or heard stories of what was going on there, as has been asserted? What seems far more likely is that in looking back people will realise they did see things but did not have the ability to face their reality. Even after decades of revelations, it is still so hard to overcome the essential trust we have been taught to have in religious figures.

But in “Women Talking,” with greater awareness comes not only a deeper sense of grief and loss, but the unexpected possibility of a deeper relationship with God. Many of the characters are actually more grounded in their faith at the end than they were at the beginning, and more

joyous, too. Indeed, the choice they end up making is grounded in a sense of invitation from God, and the hopeful possibility of real forgiveness.

Even as Catholic leaders have worked to make our communities safer and more transparent, there are so many wounds that we carry as Catholics that have not been given opportunity for expression. Women and L.G.B.T. Catholics find their identities, even their physical selves, often defined by men who say their interpretations come from the word of God. “Women Talking” charts a different path. And there is much the church could gain from offering spaces where women and others are allowed to speak and listen with a similar kind of care.

This film review was written by Jim McDermott and published in [America: the Jesuit Review](#) on March 24, 2023. Reprinted with permission.



RAISING WOMEN'S VOICES IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL

in her voice

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN PREACH

"This rich volume of women's wisdom proves why Roman Catholic women are forbidden to preach. Women take the role very seriously. They prepare carefully, read multiple scholarly sources, pray with the texts, and invite other people's opinions. This is in sharp contrast to the usual parish fare. The quality of preaching skyrockets. Once people hear these women and others, they will not be content with the mediocrity to which they have become accustomed. Blessed be!"

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D.
Co-director
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)

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NSW

INNER CITY: Group usually meets on the third Monday of each month. For more information contact *Margaret Cody* Phone: 9692 9384 Mob: 0419 426 174 or email: margaret.cody1@bigpond.com

LEURA: Group meets on the fourth Saturday morning of the month at 227 The Mall, Leura, at 10 am. All welcome. For more information contact *Monica Bright* Phone: 4757 3943 or email: mbright45@bigpond.com

ACT

CANBERRA: Group meets on second Sunday of the month, 3.30-5.30 pm at Narrabundah. For more information contact *Andrea Dean* Phone: 0487 388 873 or email andrea1959@gmail.com

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