

# The Feminist Threat to the Church - Part VII

by Patricia Phillips

I often encounter Catholics who are completely bewildered at how radical feminism has got so out of control in the Church in this country – a fact I often ponder myself. It is tempting to put the blame at the feet of these deluded women, but of course, the real fault ultimately lies with the bishops for openly encouraging and supporting their antics over the last thirty years, and we have to face up to the fact that nothing will improve, in this and in many other areas of Church life, until Rome starts giving us strong, orthodox shepherds. Dissenters of all hues are never backwards in coming forwards when it comes to giving their views on who would be suitable candidates to become bishops - in fact, whenever a position is about to become vacant, a quick flick round the dissenting 'Catholic' websites and chat rooms usually reveals strong evidence of their efforts to lobby Rome and the Papal Nuncio. Do orthodox Catholics make as much effort to suggest suitable candidates? A quick look at our current line-up of bishops would suggest not! But until all of us start to make a concerted effort to petition Rome and the Papal Nuncio for good bishops, then we have no right to complain if we continue to be lumbered with those of the wet, liberal variety, who seem more concerned with cozying up to dissenters than fearlessly proclaiming the truth. A good and thought-provoking article on this problem of the appointment of bishops was recently published on the *New Oxford Review* website ([www.newoxfordreview.org](http://www.newoxfordreview.org)) titled "*Bishops, Nuncios and Delators*" by Tom Bethell. I strongly urge readers to check it out – and then act on it!

And so, due to the weakness and even complicity of our bishops, the radical feminist bandwagon rumbles on. In November 2005 the dissenting group *Catholic Women's Network* (CWN) voted at its AGM to change its name to *Women Word Spirit* (WWS). This new title is followed by the line:- "*The voice of catholic women's network and all those interested in spirituality, theology, ministry and liturgy*". It will be interesting to see if WWS will be approved for entry in the *Catholic Directory* and also invited to be a constituent member of the *National Board of Catholic Women* (NBCW). If the following e-mail correspondence of February 2006 with Bishop Vincent Malone is anything to go by, then don't hold your breath. Bishop Malone is the Episcopal Liaison to the NBCW who also decides which groups will be approved for entry into the *Catholic Directory*. The correspondence shows his inability even to admit there is a problem with this group, let alone address it. Mr Sheridan is a layman from the Westminster diocese:-

Dear Bishop Malone,

I understand that you are responsible for allowing the group Catholic Women's Network into the Catholic Directory, and that they had satisfied you that they are not pro-abortion in any way. Please see the hyperlink below. This takes you to the pro-abortion group Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) website, to a document produced by CFFC, called "A Faith-Filled Commitment to Development Includes a Commitment to Women's Rights and Reproductive Health" (which is a euphemism for contraception and abortion). You will see that Catholic Women's Network are co-signatories of this document. I think these ladies have misled you, and I would suggest that they are removed from future editions of the Catholic Directory. I am sending this document to various Catholic organisations and individuals who I think would be interested to see it.

<http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/news/pr/2005/documents/mdgrelioungenglish.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

John Richard Sheridan.

Dear Mr Sheridan

Thank you for your message. I would be very willing to seek explanation from the CWN if they were seen to be pro-abortion (which, as you acknowledge, they deny). But scanning through the long list of signatories to the document you provide - maybe too quickly - I could see only one reference to the CWN, attached to the name of a Mairin Valdez whom I do not know. Is this the basis of your charge that the CWN is pro-abortion, or have I missed something? Thank you for your vigilance.

+Vincent Malone

Dear Bishop Malone.

Thank you for your e-mail. At the top of the collection of co-signatories, to what is *clearly* a pro abortion/contraception document, the signatures state that these are "organisations listed" and not "individuals listed". Hence, CWN - *as an organisation* - has been listed as supporting the views found in this document. Each organisation has a contact name. I have checked up and found out that Mairin Valdez is a member of the CWN "CORE" committee (which is the central planning group for CWN). Now either Ms Valdez has acted unilaterally without the knowledge or consent of the rest of CWN and its CORE committee, or the others have supported her entering CWN as a co-signatory to this pro-abortion document. If this is the case,

then I cannot see how you can allow CWN to remain in the Catholic Directory any longer. It should have nothing at all to do with CFFC - an anti-Catholic group that has been condemned on more than one occasion by the USA Bishops' Conference and by the Holy See.

Yours,

John Richard Sheridan.

Dear Mr Sheridan

I forwarded your message of 6 Feb to the Contact Secretary of CWN, who agreed that CWN had signed the document "A Faith-filled Commitment.....", but took the opportunity to reaffirm CWN's distancing of itself from the question of abortions. Their stance on contraception is less clear. However the Secretary's letter also included the information that the organisation has changed its name to "Women Word Spirit" and now has a new Contact Secretary. I have written to the new Secretary to say that of course "CWN" will not appear in the next Catholic Directory, since that organisation no longer exists, and that the new organisation will have to make formal application in accordance with the published guidelines if it wishes to be considered for inclusion. I await their response.

+Vincent Malone

Dear Bishop Malone,

This is completely disingenuous. Why co-sign a pro-abortion/contraception document and then claim to be anti-abortion? It defies reason - and I feel it would also defy reason for you to accept this dissembling. As for "Women Word Spirit" being listed in the Catholic Directory, we are only talking about a name change here, so I cannot see how ex-CWN/now WWS can be included in any future Directory. Of course, WWS will continue to be dishonest and say it accepts the teaching of the Church - when CWN never did - just in order to get in the Directory. The question is - how long will you go along with this ruse? I know for a fact that *prima facie* evidence of CWN's dissent has been sent to you over the years - such as their published declaration supporting the ordination of women - but you continued to allow them in the Directory. Just *what* degree of evidence do you require in order to say 'no' to this group, whatever name it chooses to call itself?

Yours sincerely

J R Sheridan

No further response came from Bishop Malone, but it appears that WWS will be seeking to be listed in the 2007 directory as it states on page 27 of the June 2006 *Network*, the journal of the WWS, that it “ *wrote a letter to Bishop Malone on our entry in the Catholic Directory . . .* ”

WWS continues to promote dissent from Catholic teaching in *Network* , and in June 2006 also issued a new “starter pack” to encourage more people to join up and to help develop local groups. It states on page 1 of this pack that the title WWS is “ *a more inclusive and descriptive name which also recognises that the membership has always included many women from other denominations or none* ”. It goes on to say that CWN was founded in 1984 and went through a process of “ *‘denouncing’ aspects of church which inhibit women’s participation and ‘announcing’ a new vision of how church could be* ”. The group also “ *identified strategies for bringing about change . . . in our church institutions* ”. On page 2 it states that “*WWS feels that the contribution women can make as responsible Christians, gifted in the spirit, to the RC Church is often ignored; in particular women are excluded from the ordained ministry and thereby from the leadership in the church . . .*” On page 5 of the pack, WWS proudly shows its networking links with other dissenting groups, even giving website/e-mail addresses so that they can be contacted – in other words, helping to spread and promote dissent. WWS's networking group list contains all the usual pro-abortion/contraception, pro-homosexual and pro-women's ordination groups, with which CWN have long been associated:-

- *Association for Inclusive Language*
- *Catholics for a Changing Church*
- *Catholic Womens' Ordination / Women's Ordination Worldwide*
- *Roman Catholic Caucus of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement*
- *Living Spirituality Network*
- *European Network – Church on the Move*
- *Catholics for a Free Choice*

Page 7 of the pack lists some “ *suggested books and sources* ” which reads like a *Who's Who* of dissent:- including works by rebel feminist theologians Professor Mary Grey, Rosemary Radford Reuther and ‘bishop’ Liz Stuart. Some prayers on page 11 of the starter pack include a nauseating, heretical feminist parody of the Creed by Veronica Seddon:-

*I believe that God is  
and that she is good.*

*I believe that God created me  
and I am good.  
I believe in Jesus, my redeemer  
who lived out his life with integrity  
and so was put to death.  
But this was not the end;  
he was raised:  
out of darkness comes light.  
By his life we will judge ourselves.  
I believe in Woman Church ,  
my community,  
through which I am healed  
and which gives me life.*

The pack states on page 4 that WWS members have also been “ *very active in supporting and contributing to* ” the work of the NBCW, and that the NBCW is “*recognised by the United Nations as an NGO and has sent delegates to international meetings so there has been a catholic non-Vatican voice*”, which speaks volumes about the prevalent dissenting mentality within the NBCW. It is currently having a drive to increase distribution of its free newspaper *Catholic Omnibus* , which is edited by known WWS members and supporters, and therefore contains a disproportionate input from them and other dissenters. Perhaps readers could urge their priests not to order it. Many Catholics I know simply remove it from the parish whenever it appears.

On page 6 of the Spring 2006 issue of *Catholic Omnibus* is a section titled “ *Welcoming the new NBCW President* ”. The names of the NBCW Executive Committee are listed and roughly a quarter of them are known members or supporters of WWS. One of those listed, Anne Cross, is also a member of *Catholic Women's Ordination* (CWO). She was also featured in the Summer 2005 *Catholic Omnibus* as being the ‘Chair’ of another outfit of dissidents called *Network for Lay Ministry*, based at Westminster House, Watford Way, Hendon. Anne has written an article in *The Tablet* of 15 July 2006 called “*How healthy the arguing seems*”, in which she tells us that she is leaving the Catholic Church to become an Anglican, so

that she can follow her desire to be 'ordained' as a 'priest'. She states ". . . *the Church of England has much to offer where I am based in the East End of London . . . I'm looking forward to being received into the Church of England and I will wait to see if I'm ever called for ordination. At this time I'm just enjoying being a nourished lay person again.*" Anne Cross's membership of CWO was not a secret, so her appointment to the NBCW Executive Committee should give you some idea of the mindset of those on it.

At the moment the NBCW seem very exercised about what it calls "*the management of change*". What this actually means is that having assisted in engineering an artificial shortage of priests by ensuring that any orthodox candidates are weeded out of the selection procedure, the dissenting feminists now want to oversee any process of change in order to grab the biggest slice of the action whenever they possibly can, to impose their own "ministries" and "liturgies" on the faithful. Concerns are being raised by the NBCW about the 'clustering' of parishes under priests. The front page of the Winter 2006 issue of NBCW's *Catholic Omnibus* asks: "*Cluster, Closure, and Canon Law – are we asking the right questions ?*" The report goes on to say:-

*"Declining attendance and diminishing numbers of priests are forcing plans and proposals that will change the structure of the Church at national and local levels. It is recognised and appreciated that some dioceses are engaged in wide consultation about 'the way forward'. Some, for instance, are using the opportunity to call people to greater awareness of and responsibility for their role in communion and mission. It is accepted good practice that communities – and the parish is an excellent example of a living community – should not only be involved in the consultation of pre-drafted plans, but also in the initial planning and decision-making processes. In the case of a parish, this will involve many issues, including the future organisation of the parish and the possible disposal of church property (which will often have been acquired through the efforts and contributions of earlier generations of lay people). It is disappointing, however, that the primary focus of many diocesan consultations is about determining how to 'cluster' a number of parishes into one large pastoral area because, as one diocesan consultation explained "... every parish must be in the care of a priest who has been given pastoral responsibility for it" (Canons 515 and 517). Regrettably, it did not go on to explain that the priest does not have to be a permanent resident in the parish, nor did it quote Canon 517:2 which says that: "If, because of the shortage of priests, the diocesan bishop has judged that a deacon or some other person not a priest, or a community of persons, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of the parish, he is to appoint some priest who, with the powers and faculties of a parish priest will direct their pastoral care". Sadly, few people know that Canon Law lays out several options in addressing the pastoral care of a parish. This lack of information is puzzling and disappointing, as there are already several examples of such shared responsibility and good practice. One diocese has a lay woman director of a parish; sisters from various religious orders are managing parish communities in different parts of the country; and a*

*parish without a resident priest has been successfully maintained and developed by an appointed parish team. So, is the question of how we group the parishes together the right or only place to start, when Canon Law offers such practical and imaginative alternatives to the challenge of change? How many parish communities have been consulted about the possibility of being, “entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish”? How many priests would value such co-responsibility which enabled them to focus on the sacramental, theological and spiritual care of the parish? How many priests are occupied in diocesan jobs (that could, and should, be undertaken by lay people) rather than the pastoral and spiritual care of their parish communities? How many priests have the skills to enable them to be leaders and facilitators of a parish community? These, and other questions, such as understanding why lay people are leaving the Church, the role of the priest and the laity in the parish community and our understanding of the word vocation, could help open up discussion into broader, more creative approaches to the management of change.”*

This piece, although more guarded than the outright dissent of WWS, nevertheless bares the dissenting feminist agenda for all to see:- lay women directors of parishes; religious sisters managing parishes (note that lay men and religious brothers don't get a look-in) and parishes without priests being run by parish teams (controlled by radical feminists, naturally). All these are deemed “*good practice*”. Lip service is paid to the role of the priest, saying that he might “*value*” such “*co-responsibility*” which would enable him to “*focus on the sacramental, theological and spiritual care of the parish*” – that is, until he focused on some aspect of sacramental, theological or spiritual care displeasing to the feminists, in which case, he would be removed in double-quick time. This agenda, of course, is designed to get the laity accustomed to seeing women in leadership roles, ultimately softening them up to support the ordination of women. I also believe that such lay interference in the roles proper to an ordained priest contributes to a loss of faith, which I have witnessed first-hand in a parish not far from where I live. The priest used to take a day off in the week, and a lay-led Holy Communion service was held on this day, often “*presided*” over by a dissident nun (which, needless to say, I didn't attend). When the priest left, the new incumbent offered to celebrate Mass every day for the parish, but incredibly, there was strong resistance to this from many lay-people in the parish who attended church during the week. I could not – and still cannot – comprehend why anyone would *prefer* to attend a lay-led Holy Communion service rather than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Such a preference strongly indicates a complete loss of understanding of what the Mass actually is – presuming there was any such understanding in the first place.

As if increasing dismay about the impact of radical feminism on parish and diocesan life isn't enough to contend with, we now also have certain Catholics - previously described in *Christian Order* as being of the “*pollyanna*” variety – regularly proclaiming that the radical feminists in this country are yesterday's women, a spent

force and on the way out. *If only!* **Nothing could be further from the truth.** Such a view, which appears to be based on wishful thinking as opposed to *hard facts*, plays right into the hands of these women, as it dismisses their activities as irrelevant, therefore leaving the field clear for them to pursue their agenda unhindered. It is easier to have this outlook if one lives in a diocese that is relatively unscathed, but if one happens to live in a diocese that is in total meltdown, such as Portsmouth, one would understand the dangers more clearly. Portsmouth, needless to say, is largely run by a feminist-controlled 'curia', helped by a bishop who has totally lost the plot, and a seemingly paralysed priesthood ( *why don't some of you priests do something – what have you got to lose?* ) So, if you come across this dangerous view, *challenge it*, because it simply doesn't hold water. The feminist *agenda* is certainly passé, but the determination of these women to continue imposing it, aided by the spinelessness and even complicity of our bishops, is a very real and growing threat, which we ignore at our peril.

*Our Blessed Lady of Walsingham, please pray for England, your Dowry.*