

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2022



Dear CWC members,

Warm greetings of joy, peace, and hope for the season of Christmas! We look forward with hope to a new year that will bring justice and equality to women, especially in the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Women's Council has been working toward our goals of dignity and equality for women for 22 months now! We are pleased to share with you a short summary of our collective achievements this year, as well as our hopes for growth and support from our vibrant network.

In 2022, CWC embarked on a synodal journey through listening sessions, theological discussions, and sharing. Our various regions coordinated sessions on five themes, giving local expression and context to the experiences of women in the church around the world. Breakout rooms gave an opportunity for women across the globe to interact with each other and learn about the concerns, hopes, and dreams of women around the world. Many expressed their joy at finding out how similar our aspirations for women in the Church are around the world. The liturgies and prayers organized by the different regions gave us glimpses into the culture as well as the depth of spirituality that was expressed beautifully. The theologians from each region gave us insightful messages on their respective

themes from within their context that resonated with all. You can find details of our listening sessions on our [website](#).

We would like to recognize the work of Asian theologian and scholar Marnie D. Racaza for helping CWC collate the feedback and reports from our continental listening sessions, and working alongside members of the executive to produce our summary report. Several members of the executive and CWC network ensured this report was delivered directly to Sr. Nathalie Becquart at the Synod office in Rome. You can find more about that meeting below, as well as our recommendations to the synod office, fruits of our listening sessions, and discernment together as a network. Now that we are in the continental phase, we request our regions to continue to have listening sessions or gatherings to offer feedback on the unfolding process.

Throughout the year we had two members of the executive board resign for personal reasons. We thank Carolina Del Rio and Tina Beattie for their commitment and contribution. We welcomed Teresa Casillas Fiori, based in Spain, who joins Marisa Noriega Cándano in representing the Spanish-speaking groups, and Mary Ring, from the UK, who represents the UK and English-speaking regions of Europe.



With gratitude for her commitment, contribution, and administrative skills, we say farewell to our Administrative Assistant, Reena Alphonso. Sad though we are to see her move on, we wish her every blessing in her new challenge. We welcome our new Administrative Assistant, Anita Velandhan.

As we look forward to 2023 and the first Synod on Synodality in Rome, we pray that CWC continues to inspire women to raise up their voices and call out for inclusion, voting rights, and equity in the process. CWC plans to have a presence in Rome during the synod so that women's voices will be heard outside the synod halls- if not inside. We will keep you informed of our plans and welcome your presence.

In that spirit, we invite you to consider how you might share your talents or time to strengthen and support the CWC network. Please take time to consider volunteering, or encourage someone in your network to step forward. See more on this later in the newsletter.

Thank you all for your support and prayers for the work of CWC. May Sophia accompany and guide us through 2023 to work for the full equality and dignity of women in the Catholic Church.

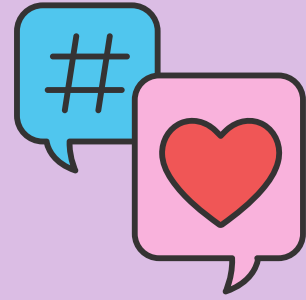
The CWC Executive Board

REPORT OF MEETING WITH SR. NATHALIE BECQUART

In early October an international delegation of CWC members traveled to Rome to present our Synod document at the Casa Internazionale delle Donne as well as at the Synod office. The delegation met with Sr. Nathalie Bequart and Thierry Bonaventura for more than an hour to discuss our findings and concerns, particularly on how women can continue to contribute to the synodal process as it moves up the hierarchy.



Social Media



To date, we have a website and a Facebook Members' Page. Recently, we also set up a public Facebook Page and a Twitter account. Please follow us, and use these spaces to connect with other CWC members.

Share your gifts with CWC

To help us better share and support the mission and work of our member organisations and to further the development and work of CWC, we are to establish support committees chaired by Executive members. To this end we would appreciate your feedback:

- How would you like to see CWC develop?
- What gifts or expertise could you share with us? For example:
 - Communications and social media
 - Membership and outreach
 - Technical support
 - Graphic design
 - Theological articles or presentations

Please share your feedback with info@catholicwomenscouncil.org - we look forward to hearing from you.

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE SYNOD OFFICE BY CWC

The following recommendations are part of our synod report, and the fruits of our collective discernment together. To see the full report and recommendations, visit the [CWC website](#).

To recover the Community of Jesus of Nazareth, which contradicts the current functioning of the Church, and to strengthen the co-responsibility of all members, we recommend the Church:

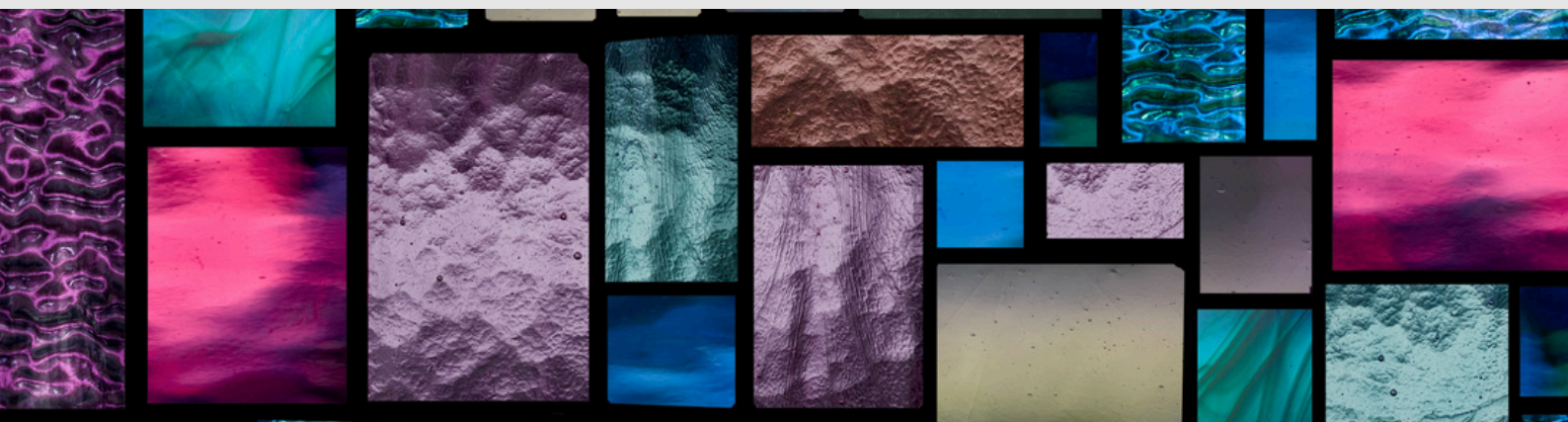
Unmask ideologies and theologies that wrongly justify sexism, racism, classism, and all forms of oppression or domination by:

- Acknowledging the links between colonialism, patriarchy, and the structures of the Church today, and work to dismantle them, so that all may equally and joyfully participate in the life of the Church.
- Embracing new technologies and methodologies that allow for greater access, communion, and participation.
- Listening to and including women not only in decision-making processes, but also in the actual decision-making. Ensure processes are transparent and accountable to the baptised.
- Involving parishioners in selecting their pastors
- Filling leadership positions and committees professionally and not arbitrarily, and limiting terms of office to a specified time period. Ordination is not proof of competence in all areas. The abuse of power and imbalance between men and women can be avoided through collaborative leadership.
- Creating a structure and an environment that enables the Church to become a global leader in upholding and modelling comprehensive human rights, particularly those that protect women against violence, extremism, and limits on her freedom.
- Renewing Church structures and canon laws to protect the rights of all members of the Church, regardless of gender or sexual identity, and not just the rights of priests and bishops. We must eradicate clericalism.
- Allowing full participation in the life and ministry of the Church of all those who identify as LGBTQI+.
- Recognising that the health of the Church depends on the healing of those who have been abused by its sins. The Church must call practice zero tolerance of any form of abuse and deliver justice to survivors. For sacraments to be real and life-giving, Churches need to be safe places.



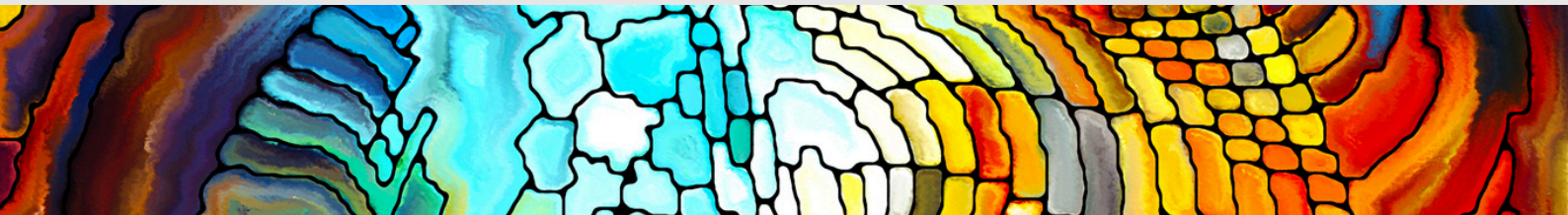
Give primacy to the Gospels, enlightened by Scripture scholars of today so that we might all live as Jesus modelled and taught.

- We long to be "the faithful... [who] met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God." May no one be excluded from the table.
- Embrace the charisms, contributions, and vocations of women and take concrete steps to facilitate their full participation in the life of the Church, including greater access to theological education, training, and formation.
- Celebrate an expansive understanding of sacramentality as experienced in so many ways every day. Sacramental life is being aware of, responding to, and living out the presence of God in the world.
- We must deepen our metaphors and language for the divine and its mystery so that no person, regardless of gender or sexual identity is excluded. We must include the wisdom, spirituality and notions of sacramentality of First Nations' Peoples, and those historically oppressed communities.
- Build Gospel-centered communities that are inclusive, participative, and welcoming of all people at the celebration of the Eucharist.
- Further develop a "sacramentality of care" so that we as Christians might better attend to the unprecedented inequalities of our time, and proactively address the devastation of the Earth due to climate change.



Acknowledge that the Church is not just the clergy, but all the baptised, the Body of Christ.

- Transform the priesthood that promotes men alone as "another Christ" and eradicate clericalism through a renewed theology of priesthood. This must include shifting or abolishing any seminary training that furthers clerical thinking and isolates priests from communities.
- Make celibacy optional.
- Open up spaces to allow God to 'speak' or be revealed through sincere encounters and accompaniment, particularly for those women who experience "voicelessness" or "invisibility" in their Church, those called to ordained ministry, and those members of the LGBTQ+ community.



- Acknowledge that women are also sacraments, and they need different forms and spaces.
- Open all ordained ministries to women.
- We seek a spiritual awakening in the Church – a shift from hierarchically-centred ritualism to a celebration of life around the cosmic table bringing in the marginalized, the excluded, and all the elements of the earth in an open communion.
- We seek a Church that breathes and co-creates with the energy of Sophia Spirit, that is beyond the binaries of the sacred and the secular, the body and the spirit, male and female, and births the Church anew.
- We seek inspiration from theologians and scholars and so many inspiring women who have gone before us.
- We walk with Jesus of Nazareth, Sophia Spirit and the many companions who share our hopes along the road.
- We assert that this renewed Church is possible! As Mary Magdalene and her companions walked to the tomb in darkness, we too walk with hope to the tomb where the Body of Christ is buried today and encountering the Risen One, we hear the mandate to announce the resurrection to the hierarchically positioned 'brothers', that another Church is possible!



REAL CHRIST-LIKE FREEDOM, BASED AS IT IS ON TRUTH, DOES NOT MEAN REMAINING ATTACHED TO MAN-MADE TRADITIONS, CULTURAL STRUCTURES, AND DOCTRINES THAT BELONG TO PAST AGES. IT MEANS TO BE FREE TO LIVE SELF-DETERMINED LIVES IN THE COMPANY OF JESUS AND ALL OUR SIBLINGS.

