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‘Trimming their lamps’

**An analysis and investigation of the Participation of Women in
the Catholic Church in the Anglosphere since the Second Vatican Council**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nature and extent of the participation of women in the Catholic Church and attitudes towards this, from the Second Vatican Council to the present day in the Anglosphere nations.

The originality of this contribution to knowledge derives from the analysis of earlier survey data on the subject authorised by the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, England & Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. A comparative study is made of these findings with those of a parallel qualitative and quantitative study undertaken in 2013 in Scotland.

The findings evidence analogous themes running through both the earlier research data and that from 2013. The duty to appreciate the diversity of Catholic women is a key factor. The dangers of a culture of clericalism are evidenced as a serious barrier to any lay participation. The need for education and formation of the laity is identified as crucial, as is the importance of Catholic social teaching in providing a conduit for increased dialogue and respect between women and men. The Church's emphasis on unity and continuity is acknowledged as both a barrier to, and yet potentially a positive means for, future collaboration between men and women.

Proposals are made about how this research could underpin future development in the Catholic Church, particularly in Scotland. These include utilising an oblique methodology and the implementation of a receptive feminism. The facilitation of dialogue would ensure there is true gender equality, allowing the gifts of both women and men to be engaged in meeting the needs of the Church and the world.

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DEDICATION

To Peter John

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For the support of family and friends throughout my years of study that made this research possible.

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For all those who participated in the empirical research project in Scotland in 2013, giving so generously of their time and insights.

INTRODUCTION

‘Trimming their lamps’

The original title for this study was: ‘Those who ‘stand and wait.’¹ However, the presupposition that Catholic women were restricted to the perimeters of Church involvement because of gender and lay standing was promptly proven to be inaccurate. A more authentic title would equate their position to that of the ‘wise bridesmaids’ in scripture, actively engaged in ensuring they were ready for service, whenever that would be.²

The point of departure for feminist analysis is always in personal experience rather than in conjecture.³ Ergo, this research project grew from my experiences as a Catholic woman, privileged to have lived and worked in various situations within the Church. Theological study had exposed a dichotomy between the teaching and practice of the early Christian community, and some extant Church structures and policies that warranted further investigation. Encounters with Catholic women and laymen had accentuated the common desire for clarification on the roles and responsibilities of the laity, and their willingness to contribute their personal experiences to a development of lay service in the Church. These factors led me to dig deeper, on an ecclesiological exploration that would lead from the Vatican, through the Anglosphere, to the local Church here in Scotland. Understanding the process of the research will clarify the findings that resulted.

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching provide a framework to live by, grounded in the Christian belief that we are all, male and female, created ‘in God’s image and likeness’, therefore, every human person is understood as equal in dignity and value.⁴ Aware that theory and reality do not always align, it was vital to discover whether the Church practices what it preaches and to assess the participation of women in the Church in this third millennium. By participation, I mean active involvement in the various ministries and

¹ John Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Sonnet 19, 304.

² Matthew 25:1-12.

³ Maria Riley, *Transforming Feminism* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1989), 44.

⁴ *Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) Genesis 1: 27.

endeavours that constitute the Church's life as a faith community. This is not to suggest any unconditional right to ecclesial ministry but rather to affirm that involvement in such service should be determined by experience and expertise rather than gender or state of life.

My Sitz Im Leben is as part of the generation that grew into adults after the Second Vatican Council. Mine is a bridging generation, reared in the strong, devotional, pre-conciliar Catholic culture, which had the opportunity as adults to study and interrogate Church teaching and praxis. Like many others, I would qualify as one of the 'devout dissidents'.⁵ This nomenclature of Andrew Greeley applies to those individuals who remain totally committed to Catholic faith and practice while supporting efforts for reform of the institutional Church, particularly regarding equality and justice. It is therefore, perfectly feasible to be a committed Catholic and to advocate the need for equality of participation of both women and men, indeed John Paul II made explicit reference to gender equality as an integral part of God's plan for humanity:

Unfortunately, even today there are situations in which women live, de facto if not legally, in a condition of inferiority. It is urgently necessary to cultivate everywhere a culture of equality, which will be lasting and constructive to the extent that it reflects God's plan ... Equality between man and woman is a fact asserted from the first page of the Bible in the stupendous narrative of creation.⁶

As God's plan for humanity has been revealed as involving every human person, created in his image, then surely women should be equally valued and integrated into the life and mission of the Church? In the course of this research, relevant literature from scripture, Tradition, magisterial teaching, and contemporary theology was studied to glean insights into the perception of women in the life of the Church. This unearthed some interesting questions. It became clear that Vatican II was a watershed moment for the development of Church teaching and openness to the modern world. The letter and spirit of the Council encouraged the Catholic Church to engage with the contemporary realities of the modern world. One reality was a new appreciation of the place of women in society because of the efforts of the women's movement to secure

⁵ Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution* (London: University of California Press Ltd. 2004), 79.

⁶ John Paul II, *Angelus reflection* June 25, 1995 (in preparation for the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing),
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/angelus/1995/.

enfranchisement and equal rights. What then did the Council have to say about the position of women in the Church? Is this community of faith, founded on belief in the equal dignity of every human person created in the image of God, authentically encouraging the full participation of women and men?

At the closing liturgy of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI gave an address specifically addressing certain groups, among them women. There was no similar salutation to men, which seemed to suggest a certain perception that women were dislocated from the Church. Instead, there was a dramatic greeting for the female ‘half of the immense human family’: ‘The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved’.⁷ This is an affirming clarion call for empowerment and participation, yet another statement by Paul VI seems to indicate that the Council felt gender equality was already a reality within the Church which, he said, ‘is proud to have glorified and liberated woman, and in the course of the centuries, in diversity of characters, to have brought into relief her basic equality with man’.⁸ Does this assertion have validity? Although there is an impressive history of women of faith, most of them achieved recognition despite, rather than because of, the institutional Church. These faith-filled women include the women of scripture who are seldom named. The Desert Mothers, and those women who worked alongside the early Christian writers designated the Church Fathers, are rarely referred to.⁹ The Foundresses of Religious orders of women often met active opposition from the hierarchy in their lifetimes. Female theologians have frequently been perceived as absurd or dangerous. Generations of holy laywomen have kept the faith and handed it on to new generations, but are often revered as saints only within their families.

Despite this ambivalent history, I will argue that Vatican II was indeed a turning point for women, opening up new possibilities and opportunities. These included theological study and engagement in liturgical and pastoral ministries, first for Religious women and then for laywomen too. Pope John XXIII paved the

⁷ Paul VI, ‘Address at Second Vatican Council’ (08/12/1965) http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_epilogo-concilio_en.html.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Such as: Macrina the older, Macrina the younger, Mary of Egypt, Theodora of Alexandria et al.

way for these developments when he made clear that the council he had summoned was to be ecumenical, pastoral, and collegial, thus setting it on a very different trajectory from previous Church councils convened specifically to clarify dogma or refute heresy. With a commitment to both *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* Vatican II aimed to demonstrate that, in the words of Paul Lakeland, ‘going back to the sources and bringing up to date are not contradictory impulses’.¹⁰ The practicalities of achieving a balance between these different aims are, as we shall see, still a work in progress.

The last document of the Council, *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World, set a high benchmark for inclusivity and became the lodestar for my research:

forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language, or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. It is regrettable that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere, as is the case with women who are denied the chance freely to choose a husband, or a state of life, or to have access to the same educational and cultural benefits as are available to men.¹¹

Discovery of the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report by Marie MacDonald, Peter Carpenter, Sandie Cornish, Michael Costigan, Robert Dixon, Margaret Malone, Kevin Manning, and Sonia Wagner was an inspirational and decisive moment in this research.¹² This innovative project investigating women’s participation in the Catholic Church in Australia, instigated by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), is not widely known. However, the findings are important, not only to me personally and to other women as individuals, but also to the Church as it considers how to reinvigorate its mission and engage authentically with society. Study of the report of this survey, *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* renewed my conviction that the Church needs to be involved in what Kevin Kelly describes as the ‘interface’ between theological reflection and pastoral practice.¹³ Bringing the lived experiences of ordinary

¹⁰ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2004), 238.

¹¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* [The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World] in *The Vatican Collection: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, Vol. 1, editor Austin Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing, 1992), 29.

¹² Marie MacDonald et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* (Sydney: Harper Collins Religious, 1999).

¹³ Cf. Kevin T. Kelly, *From a Parish base: Essays in Pastoral Theology* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd Ltd, 1999), 1.

people into consideration seems to me an essential part of theological study, and attempts not to give a voice to the voiceless, but rather to encourage people to embrace the responsibilities of using their voices.¹⁴ Thus, the Scottish empirical survey of 2013 was devised as a valuable component, although as a part-time student with work and family commitments, time and resources permitted this only to be a relatively small-scale piece of research. Nevertheless, it provides an important snapshot of opinion from a very diverse group of participants.

Aim

This dissertation aims to add to the body of academic study in Catholic ecclesiology on the roles and responsibilities of the laity, particularly women. It does so, firstly, by considering the legacy of Vatican II and the ontological presuppositions that underpin the Church's teaching and understanding of the apostolate of the laity in general, and women in particular.

Secondly, it analyses some of the valuable Anglosphere research undertaken in the past, which is not widely known, but which has much to contribute to the current debate. In the wake of the Council, qualitative research was commissioned into the participation of women in the Church, by the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the U.S. Commissions of the Bishop's Conferences in England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland also undertook smaller scale investigations into the participation of the laity. The findings from these research projects are examined systematically, identifying common ground, and any divergence.

Thirdly, it offers the results of a recent social survey of attitudes to the participation of women in the local Catholic Church, based primarily in the Scottish context. This is relatively small in scale but the first of its kind. The decision to utilize the methodology developed by the researchers in Australia for the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus project*, means that the findings from the Scottish research would have a benchmark for comparison and thus another level for analysis.

¹⁴Cf. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1982).

This research is both necessary and timely. It is necessary, because of a serious remodelling of the landscape of the local Church in the Anglosphere nations, caused by increasing numbers of Catholics disengaging from regular practice, the lack of religious vocations in the northern hemisphere, and the closure or amalgamation of parishes.¹⁵ It is timely, because of the Francis factor, that is, a new Pope, whose words and actions renew the hopes of many Catholics, optimistic that the teaching of Vatican II will now be implemented in a fully inclusive and compassionate Church.

Key research questions

This thesis will address six key research questions:

1. What is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on women's roles and responsibilities within the Church?
2. After the Council ended, did teaching develop in line with the Council Fathers instruction for this to be an ongoing process?
3. How did the local Church receive and implement the teaching regarding women?
4. What empirical research exists to evidence the participation of women in the Church in Anglosphere nations?
5. What is the current situation regarding the participation of women in the local Church in Scotland?
6. How can any barriers to the participation of women be overcome and women's involvement in the Church at every level be increased?

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 considers the first research question with an analysis of key teaching from the Second Vatican Council, which pertains to the vocation of the laity and their participation in the mission of the Church. The Council's explicit teaching of both gender equality and greater involvement of the laity is determined and ratified in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, even though no framework for implementation is delineated.

¹⁵ See the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for an example of such statistics from the US, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>. For the UK: British Religion in Numbers, <http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/> - Why Church: Belonging and Believing, http://www.whychurch.org.uk/num_churches.php.

Chapter 2 outlines post-conciliar teaching on the role of the laity and women within the institution. To address the second research question, the important document *Christifideles Laici* is considered, as is the teaching of Pope John Paul II, which has underpinned current ecclesial debate about the role of women. Also examined are the documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*, the Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, and *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*. The Congregation for the Clergy's instruction *Ecclesiae de Mystero* is also given due consideration. All of these magisterial monographs focus on aspects of women's involvement in the Church.

Chapter 3 outlines the initiatives taken by bishops to implement the teaching of Vatican II when they returned from the Council to their dioceses, in line with the third research question, namely, to uncover the reception of conciliar teaching in the local Church. The focus is on the Bishops Conferences in the Anglosphere, that is, those countries that not only have English as an official language but which also share common cultural heritage. A scrutiny of this work will address the fourth research question.

Chapter 4 aims to discover the current participation of women in the local Church. It describes the process and results of a micro empirical survey, undertaken in Scotland in 2013, to provide evidence to answer the fifth research question. Utilising the Australian methodology, quantitative data was obtained by questionnaires to parishes, schools, groups and via the research website. Qualitative data was sourced through interviews with individuals and focus groups. These results are analysed and then a comparative study undertaken to identify differences or similarities with the earlier Anglosphere research initiatives.

Chapter 5 addresses the sixth research question. That is, a strategy will be proposed for utilising research findings in the Church context. From an exploration of key finding, suggestions are made as to how key insights could be developed to increase opportunities for women to participate fully in the Church in the future.

Methodology

Research into the documents from Vatican II uncovered evidence to support a new integration of women, as well as laymen into Church life and ministry. The Council Fathers understood their work as a process rather than simply an event and instructed that their teaching should be the subject of ongoing study and development. Therefore, scrutiny of official Church teaching after the Council is essential to identify whether any advancement of the participation of women occurred. Investigation was also necessary into the reception and implementation of conciliar teaching at local Church level. For the purposes of this thesis, an exploration was made of data collected by Church research in the Anglosphere nations. These findings, detailed in chapter three, led to the undertaking of a comparative survey in the local Church today, detailed in chapter four. Analysis of the findings from 2013 verifies much of the earlier data, and ratifies the proposals in chapter five to enable the full engagement of women in the Church.

Clarification of terminology

Aware of the nuances of language, and of the different interpretations of certain terms, clarification is given here of the usage of key words in this thesis.

Participation is used here to mean inclusion in whatever is appropriate. This is not to suggest that anyone, man or woman, has the right to automatic participation in Church ministry or leadership, rather it is understood within the boundaries of what is right and fitting for each person, but without any restriction merely because of gender or lay status. This relates to lay ecclesial ministry, not ecclesiastical, ordained ministry.

The term ‘the Church’ is used here to mean the Catholic Church, as that is the faith community under review. ‘The Church’ also signifies the whole People of God, that is, clergy, religious, and laity. When reference is to the institutional Catholic Church, this is stated, or the terms Church structures or hierarchy are used.

Clericalism relates to an over emphasis on the ecclesiastical dimension of the Church, almost an ecclesiolatry, where the Church as the people of God, is subsumed by a sense of the ordained ministry as the Church.

When reference is made to the laity or lay faithful it follows Vatican II's definition of the laity in *Lumen Gentium* 31: 'The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church.'

Reference to women will not be specifically as laywomen, unless it is to differentiate them from female Religious as all women are laity in the Catholic Church.

The term 'formation' refers to theological education, adult catechesis, and training in the skills necessary for pastoral ministries.

Reference to the Second Vatican Council will be as Vatican II or the Council. Reference to the participants at the Council will be as the Council Fathers or the bishops.

Key texts

All references from Scripture are from the Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

The documents of Vatican II are from the translation edited by Austin Flannery in *The Vatican Collection: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, vol.1 (New York: Costello Publishing, 1992). Church Documents will be referred to first with full nomenclature e.g. *Lumen Gentium*: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and then by their Latin titles.

CHAPTER 1: JOY AND HOPE - The teaching of Vatican II on the People of God

‘Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Ps 37:4)

Introduction

In this chapter, key documents of the Second Vatican Council are interrogated, to discover the teaching germane to women’s participation in the Church. Although the Council documents rarely mention women explicitly, all have elements that pertain to the laity and are therefore inclusive of women.

This thesis will focus on the teaching in three key documents namely *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church; *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. Consideration is also made of the sections on the laity in the Code of Canon Law. Published in 1983, the Code is often referred to as the last document of the Council because its renewal was part of the initiative of John XXIII.

The chapter will identify several significant key themes that emerge from these documents - in particular, the ongoing development of Church teaching and self-understanding, the formation and vocation of the laity, the *sensus fidelium*, the relation of the Church to contemporary culture and the notion of a shared mission by all the People of God. Subsequent chapters will explore these themes in more depth. However, before examining the documents that were the fruit of Vatican II, it is important to highlight the understanding of the laity in the 1917 Code of Canon Law that would underpin the deliberations of the bishops. This considered laity not as *laos*, the biblical term for the whole faith community or People of God, but as ‘not clergy’. The 1917 Code viewed the Church as a perfect and unequal society and its focus was clerical and juridical.

It is also important to acknowledge that the documents of Vatican II have been subject to intense scrutiny and conflicting interpretation throughout the fifty years since promulgation. Theological and historical debate began as soon as the Council ended, when the early unanimity in accepting the teaching, gradually disintegrated into polarised factions of ‘progressive’ versus

‘traditionalist’, emphasising the ‘spirit’ of the Council or the ‘letter’. The language of continuity versus rupture, of process versus event, led to a variety of interpretations of the texts and contributed to the diversity in reception of the teaching, most radically in the total rejection of the Council by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.¹ Within this critical context, the analysis here is offered from a progressive standpoint, that holds the Council as both process and event, a paradigm of the possibilities of development from a ‘*via media*’.

To demonstrate why Vatican II was such a significant milestone for the participation of women in the Church it is necessary to consider its origins. By way of introduction, I will therefore give a critical overview of the sociological setting in which the Council took place, as this was a period of radical change for women in secular society too.

Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council was convoked in 1959, opened in 1962, and closed in 1965. Consideration is often given only to the four formal sessions of debate in the *aula*. However, it is important, I suggest, to reflect on the whole six-year period. The time and effort spent in drafting, discussing and redrafting texts, involved a vast array of people, before the final versions were approved by the Council Fathers, and entered into the canon of official Church teaching.

The news that a new ecumenical council was to be held was announced by Pope John XXIII on January 25, 1959, only ninety days after his election. The Pope made plain his intention that this Council was to ‘foster the good of souls’ and bring the Church into ‘clear and definite correspondence with the spiritual needs of the present day’.² The group of cardinals he addressed were surprised that this elderly man, elected as an interim pope, should have come up with such an ambitious plan for Church reform.³ Pope John also made it clear that this Council was to be truly ecumenical with an invitation to participate extended not only to the Catholic hierarchy but also to other Christians as Observers. Pope John invited lay Catholics to attend also, at first only men, but then from

¹ An excellent summary of the diversity of theological debate is found in Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012).

² Guiseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 1.

³ Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), xi -xii.

the third session, women too were invited. The female presence was due primarily to the intervention of Cardinal Suenens who, at the end of the second session, asked: 'Why are we even discussing the reality of the Church when half of the Church is not even represented here?'⁴ Fifteen women, Religious and lay, were appointed in 1964, increasing to twenty-three by the end of the Council. More will be said about these pioneering women later.⁵ Another novel feature of this Council was the involvement of the media, which published updates on the proceedings, thereby providing a source of information for the laity worldwide.

The convening of this Council was not to revoke a heresy or clarify a specific aspect of doctrine as had been the norm for earlier Church Councils. Instead, this Council was to be an opportunity for bishops from across the world to meet, reflect, and debate the future development of the Catholic faith community. It became what Karl Rahner later called 'the Church's first official self-actualisation as a world Church': the dominant European experience was tempered by bishops with pastoral experience of the Church in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.⁶ In Rahner's opinion, the Council was epochal, rivalling the 'transition from Jewish to Gentile Christianity'.⁷ Two priorities were emphasised, the need first to go back to the sources in Scripture and Tradition, *ressourcement*, and second, to foster renewal, *aggiornamento*, to bring the Church up to date. Both these concepts were important for the role of women in the Church. They allowed consideration of the historical contribution of women since the earliest gatherings of the followers of Christ, as well as the contemporary reappraisal of gender equality in secular society.

Pope John clarified that there were to be no lists of anathemas for this was to be a pastoral council, portraying the Church as mother as well as teacher. The deliberations were to focus on how the Church could fulfil its mission of presenting the truth authentically and coherently to the world. The Pope intimated that this required of the participants 'serenity of mind, brotherly concord, moderation in proposals, dignity in discussion, and wisdom of

⁴ Mary Luke Tobin, 'Women in the Church since Vatican II', *America*, November 01, 1986, accessed September 01, 2013, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/100/women-Church-vatican-ii>.

⁵ See page 52.

⁶ Karl Rahner, 'Towards a fundamental theological interpretation of Vat II' in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, ed. Lucien Richard et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

deliberation’.⁸ A council in this mode could enable organic development that built on the Tradition of the Church, expanding and clarifying it with new insights.⁹ The Pope hoped for a spirit of joy in a Council that would propose solutions to the perennial problems of human life, not through censures but the ‘medicine of mercy’.¹⁰

Vatican II did not suddenly appear from nowhere; the impetus for renewal had been simmering among those involved in the movements for scriptural, liturgical, theological, and pastoral renewal within the Church. When Pope John called for ‘a springtime in the Church’, many bishops already appreciated, with Cardinal Suenens, that ‘in growing things the full potential of springtime is never reached except at the price of a certain pruning’.¹¹ These Council Fathers were willing to respond to the possibilities of this seismic event, even though they could not guarantee the consequences.

Preparation for Vatican II began with consultation of bishops across the world, about the issues that concerned them in the local Church. Ten Preparatory Commissions of bishops and theologians collated and synthesized these results into a series of seventy *schemas* for debate in 1962. The bishops who arrived in Rome for the first session were unsure of the nature and purpose of the gathering. From the later accounts, many were sceptical, some were suspicious, others were hopeful.¹² They came as a disparate group, representing diverse cultures, generations, theological perspectives, and educational backgrounds, united only by gender, Baptism, and Episcopal consecration. For some of those present, like Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II, there was already a sense that: ‘a pastoral council proclaims, recalls or clarifies truths for the primary purpose of giving Christians a lifestyle, a way of thinking and acting’.¹³ Another *peritus* or theological expert was Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI. He

⁸ John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, October 11th, 1962, accessed February 01, 2013, <http://conciliaria.com/tag/gaudet-mater-ecclesia>.

⁹ Cf. Ladislav Örsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press 2009), 85.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Leon-Joseph Suenens, *Co-responsibility in the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 14.

¹² See Alberic Stacpoole (Editor), *Vatican II by those who were there* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986); Dennis Hurley, *Vatican II - Keeping the dream alive*. (South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2005).

¹³ Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal* (London: Collins, 1980), 18.

reported ‘a certain feeling of exhilaration...the mysterious sense of new beginnings that has a way of stirring man and propelling him forward.’¹⁴

From the very first session, it was clear that this would be no token assembly as there was a startling upheaval of the agenda drawn up by the Curia. The Council Fathers, led by Cardinals Lienart and Frings, decided against the format planned by Curial officials. Instead, they agreed to begin by spending time getting to know one another so that they could ensure the later debating and voting processes were significant and effective. Joseph Ratzinger attested to the impact of this outbreak of collegiality: ‘something really new and meaningful had come back - the development of a “horizontal catholicity”... as a necessary complementary element to the vertical unity joining all to the centre of the Church’.¹⁵ This solidarity across the Church is an important factor to be borne in mind as we consider the role of the laity

The first subject to be deliberated at the Council was the liturgy, a subject already under discussion due to the effects of the twentieth-century liturgical movement which had spread from Europe across the world, helped by the sanction of both Pius X and Pius XII. The movement’s aim was to enable the laity to participate fully in the liturgy, and the Council ensured this would happen with the ratification of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* at the second session in 1963.¹⁶ This atmosphere of positive collaboration set the scene for all subsequent debate. The Council also set in place liturgical developments that allowed women, for the first time, to undertake certain ministries.

The Australian theologian Ormond Rush suggests a threefold interpretative reading of the Council texts in order to understand their significance. Firstly, he suggests that consideration of the ‘hermeneutics of the authors’ gives insight into their intentions in formulating the text. The history of the development of the text and the process that produced the final document can give a sense of the ‘spirit’ of the Council.¹⁷ Secondly, a synchronic reading which includes the ‘hermeneutics of the texts’ that is, the relation between texts within the

¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 20.

¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 24.

¹⁶ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy] (1963)

¹⁷ Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some hermeneutical principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 1-34.

corpus, reveals additional insights.¹⁸ Thirdly, any reading should include consideration of the ‘hermeneutics of the receivers’, seeking to understand how the texts were interpreted and how they have affected the reality of life for the people of God.¹⁹ This methodology is utilised in this dissertation as we now consider the most relevant sections of certain documents to elicit magisterial understanding of the role of women in the Church. The background to the formulation of these documents, their relationship to other teaching documents issued by the Council, and their effects in daily life for Catholics are all important factors in interpreting the teaching of Vatican II.

Lumen Gentium: The Church ad intra

A vital starting point for any investigation into the participation of women in the Church is Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. This was solemnly approved on 21st October 1964 with only five opposing votes, a clear indication of a remarkable consensus of opinion. This also evidenced a radically changed mind-set in the Council Fathers, from their consideration of the various drafts to the final approved text. Bishop Emile de Smedt echoed the opinions of the majority, when he criticized the original *schema* for being clerical, juridical and ‘inappropriately triumphalist’.²⁰ Arguably, the redrafting was the first sign, of a move away from clerical exclusivity to an awareness of the need for an inclusivity that valued the contributions of the laity alongside that of clergy.

In the debate of this *schema*, a decisive intervention made by Cardinal Suenens suggested that the consideration of the Church *ad intra* and *ad extra* would be illuminating. That is, the deliberations needed to consider how the Church relates externally to the world, as well as reflecting on the internal constitution of the Church. Accordingly, the Council decided to draw up a separate *schema* on the Church and the modern world - *Gaudium et Spes* - which will be discussed below.

Many commentators have indicated the importance of the history of the text of *Lumen Gentium* and the debates that underpinned its reformulation. Peter

¹⁸ Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 35-51.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-68.

²⁰ Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 13.

Hebblethwaite, for example, argued that ‘the stimulating clash of opinions was better than the anxious imposition of uniformity.’²¹ Gaillardetz claimed that these discussions fuelled ‘one of the most remarkable shifts in ecclesiology ever found in an ecclesiological document’.²² *Lumen Gentium* was, Christopher Jamieson asserts, a product ‘woven from the Bible, the Fathers and human experience’.²³ The aim was to ensure that the Church was dynamically aware of, and responsive to, the world of its day, while holding faithfully to the heritage of its history. The Council Fathers envisaged no conflict between continuity and renewal, and I would argue that this was important for the perspective of a greater participation of women, building on the contributions of women in the past, while open to the new understanding of inclusivity and equality prevalent in contemporary society. We will now consider some central themes from a consensus reading of *Lumen Gentium*, focusing on those that pertain to the roles and responsibilities of the laity, and therefore of women.

Church: sign to the world

The tone is set from the opening words: ‘Christ is the light of humanity’. *Lumen Gentium* is intended to be a reflection on the nature of a faith community called to be, like Christ, a beacon of truth and hope for the whole of humanity.²⁴

Stephen Schloesser suggests that in *Lumen Gentium* ‘epideictic rhetoric appealing to the ideal end of divine and human unity’ replaced the ‘anxious language of asserting authority’ of the original *schema* in the final constitution.²⁵

The Council Fathers made clear that the meaning and purpose of the Church are to be found not in structures or dogmas *per se*, but in the person of Christ.²⁶

The document’s opening paragraphs outline the gradual stages of the development of the community of the followers of Christ as recorded in the scriptures. The early Church became the ‘sequel’ to Jesus in the light of his life, death and resurrection.²⁷ Echoing the Constitution on the Liturgy, the

²¹ Peter Hebblethwaite, *The Runaway Church* (London: Collins, 1975), 14.

²² Richard R Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 26.

²³ Christopher Jamieson, et al. ‘*To live is to change*’: *A way of reading Vatican II* (Essex: Rejoice Publications, 1995), 53.

²⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 1.

²⁵ Stephen Schloesser, ‘Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II’ in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?*, ed. John O’Malley, et al. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2008), 105.

²⁶ See Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 15.

²⁷ Bernard P. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology through the centuries* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 46.

Church in *Lumen Gentium* is called a 'sacrament'. That is, it is a sign that makes present, through the action of grace, what it signifies, in this case the continual presence of God in all of creation.²⁸ This conceptualization of the Church as sacrament had emerged in the *nouvelle théologie*, and was exemplified by Henri De Lubac, who wrote: 'if Christ is the sacrament of God; the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ ... she really makes him present'.²⁹ The Church achieves this, not through hierarchical structures or juridical systems of order, but through the actions of every Church member who together form the *congregatio fidelium*. The mystery of the Church lies in God's invitation to every human person to participate in building a community of faith to enable participation in the perfect community, that is, the Trinitarian life of God. The text of *Lumen Gentium* clearly imaged this tripartite life of God. As Ratzinger would argue: 'the Church is seen as determined by pneumatological as well as Christological elements; the Church is charismatic as well as sacramental in structure.'³⁰

Bernard Prusak explains the concept of the Church as sacrament further: 'As mystery, the community called Church reveals not what is completely unknown, but rather something about which there is always more to know'.³¹ I suggest therefore, that an evolving development of doctrine is essential. Moreover, *Lumen Gentium*'s assumption that the Church - in the form of the People of God - must be open to persistent inspiration by the Holy Spirit recognises the diversity of persons and gifts as a strength, as all are necessary to build up the body of Christ.³²

Church: inclusive and humble

Emerging from the awareness of the Church as sacrament, a new understanding of the whole Christian community is declared in *Lumen Gentium* 8. Here the Church of Christ is seen to 'subsist' in the Catholic Church, although it is acknowledged that 'many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure'. The Council Fathers' acceptance of the grace and faithfulness of other followers of Christ affirmed that these churches were

²⁸ Cf. Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 5.

²⁹ Henri De Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 147.

³⁰ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 74.

³¹ Prusak, *The Church Unfinished*, 14.

³² Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12.

not separate from Christ, despite being separate from the Catholic Church.³³ This would open up the possibilities for Roman Catholic involvement in ecumenical dialogues such as ARCIC, as well as the development of initiatives such as Durham University's Receptive Ecumenism project, founded in 2006, which explores ways that Christian communities could learn from each other.³⁴

In the same paragraph, the authors of *Lumen Gentium* enhanced this cutting-edge statement on ecumenism by the clarification that the Church is 'at the same time holy and always in need of being purified'. Their acknowledgement that the Church could be sinful reflects a new honesty and, Raphael Gallagher suggests, a Church that now had the humility to listen to and learn from truths wherever these are recognised.³⁵ In *Lumen Gentium*, the Church no longer conceives of itself as a perfect society; rather the Council Fathers stressed the need for vigilance and continual reform within the Church as well as outside it.³⁶ These insights are surely crucial for the participation of women in the Church, implying as they do that the Church could make errors of judgement, and that past practices could be changed in the light of increased knowledge and understanding.

Sensus Fidelium

Vatican II describes the Church as the People of God or the scriptural Body of Christ. In *Lumen Gentium*, the bishops deliberately chose to focus on the whole Church before considering the various states of life for individuals within the faith community. For the first time, a theology of the Christian faithful is delineated which sees them as the people of God who together share an equal dignity, and a common calling to discipleship through baptism. Every follower of Christ shares in his triple *munera* of priest, prophet, and king.³⁷

Chapter one of *Lumen Gentium* sets the framework for a thorough scriptural grounding. Daniel Harrington describes this as a 'kind of Midrash or anthology

³³ Ladislav Örsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 14.

³⁴ See Paul Murray, 'Receptive Ecumenism, and the Call to Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda', in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5-25.

³⁵ Cf. Raphael Gallagher, *Response to Dermot Lane in Faith, Word & Culture*, ed. Liam Bergin (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004), 73.

³⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

of biblical quotations' which undelay the exposition of relationships within the Church that was to follow.³⁸ The term 'God's people' includes both clergy and laity, in a *communio* of persons created and sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. By the sacraments of initiation, individuals became part of the body of Christ. Here, Ladislav Örsy would argue, there can be no hierarchy or degree of value between human persons as all are equal, being reflections of the *imago Dei*.³⁹ It is, Örsy explains, on the basis of this internal 'theological reality of *communio* in the Spirit' that the practical implements of unity such as collegiality, ecumenism, and solidarity can flourish.⁴⁰ I would suggest that this *koinonia* too could galvanise acceptance of gender equality in roles and responsibilities within the Church.

This teaching removed one of the bastions of the fortress Church mentality, which had allowed Catholics to ignore the priesthood of all the baptized because of its correlation with the theology of Luther and the Reformers. The highlighting of the *sensus fidelium*, that is, the shared beliefs of the community of faith, was planned and deliberate, evidenced by the positioning of the chapter on the People of God before the chapter on the hierarchy.⁴¹ But *Lumen Gentium* does more than identify the existence of the *sensus fidelium*. Paragraph 12 explicitly states: 'the whole body of the faithful, who have an anointing that comes from the holy one, cannot err in matters of belief'. According to Örsy, this accords with the teaching of the First Vatican Council that the faithful are: 'collectively the keepers of the sacred memory of the Christ event, and they collectively have the wisdom to build the Church'.⁴²

Recognition of the gifts of every human person

Lumen Gentium reflects on charisms, that is, the gifts of the Holy Spirit that continue to be given to all the faithful, to enable the Church to complete its mission. The Council calls for Church leaders to be open and sensitive to the

³⁸ Daniel Harrington, 'Why is the Church the people of God' in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, ed. Lucian Richard et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 52.

³⁹ Cf. Örsy, *Receiving the Council*, 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., page 5.

⁴¹ Cf. Brian Gleeson, Commemorating *Lumen Gentium*: A Short History of a Ground-breaking Charter, *Australian eJournal of Theology* 3 (August 2004).

http://aejt.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/395655/AEJT_3.12_Gleeson.pdf

⁴² Örsy, *Receiving the Council*, 76, cf. DS 3074 (See Heinrich Denzinger et al. (Editors) *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Freiburg, Basel, Rome & Vienna: Herder, 1997).

gifts of all people, to ensure that they do not ‘extinguish the Spirit but to test all things and hold fast to what is good’.⁴³ This commendation would later influence the various research projects authorised by Anglosphere Bishops’ Conferences, as we shall see in chapter three.

Lumen Gentium also recognises charisms in other Christian Churches, in other faiths, and in those who have no understanding of God, but seek to live lives that are good.⁴⁴ Such insightful teaching reflects a growing understanding and acceptance of pluralism in faith and society, respecting and encompassing everyone as recipients of grace. The Council Fathers also deepened the understanding of ‘catholicity’, rooting it firmly in the Pauline theology that ‘all of us have been baptised in Christ Jesus’.⁴⁵ True universality is achieved when unity and diversity are held in balance, or as *Lumen Gentium* states when ‘the whole and each of the parts are strengthened by the common sharing of all things’.⁴⁶ The Council clearly exhibits a receptivity to collaboration between people, whatever their differences, which I suggest has positive implications for gender equality.

Authority as service

In Chapter three of *Lumen Gentium*, the common perception that Church authority is equated with power or status is completely reversed. Instead, the emphasis is on authority as service. The Council situates the model for this in Christ, the good shepherd who epitomises the task of those in ministry in ‘promoting the interests of their brethren’ so that they work towards a common goal and thus ‘attain to salvation’.⁴⁷ Ladislav Örsy makes the powerful assertion that this implies that ‘the needs of the community should command the operation of the legislator’ rather than vice versa.⁴⁸ This is an important insight, especially when, in chapter three of this thesis, we consider the response from bishops to the needs of their communities, made known to them through research and consultation.

⁴³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 12, cf. Thessalonians 5:12, 19-20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 15, 16.

⁴⁵ Romans 6:3.

⁴⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁸ Örsy, *Receiving the Council*, 61.

The constitution also highlights the bishops' responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the particular local Churches designated to their care.⁴⁹ It recognises that the episcopal leadership has a duty to enforce Canon Law and make judgments.⁵⁰ However, *Lumen Gentium* points out that it is principally 'by their counsels, exhortations and example', that bishops must be an influence for good to those over whom they will preside.⁵¹ Here the episcopate called upon themselves to focus anew on displaying a 'truly priestly and pastoral ministry both to believers and unbelievers alike'.⁵² This is particularly important for the purposes of this thesis, since bishops have the authority to facilitate or impede the collaboration of women and laymen in ministry.

The Laity

Chapter four of *Lumen Gentium* is crucial: 'Having made clear the functions of the hierarchy, the holy Council is pleased to turn its attention to the state of those Christians who are called the laity.'⁵³ The Council stresses that everything that they have written concerning the People of God 'is addressed equally to laity, Religious and clergy', the laity being explicitly, 'men and women'.⁵⁴ Acknowledgment is made of the contribution of the laity to the 'welfare of the whole Church', without whom the clergy would be unable to fulfil the 'salvific mission of the Church to the world'.⁵⁵

Disappointingly, the Council defines what the lay faithful are by a negative definition of what they are not, reminiscent of the 1917 Code, that is, those in holy orders, or the consecrated Religious life.⁵⁶ During the debates in the *aula*, Bishop Wright of Pittsburgh called for a more positive definition. Bishop Hengsbach of Essen reassured the Council that any empowering of the laity posed no threat to the hierarchy but would help bishops fulfil their obligations, not least because it would avoid 'frustrating the Holy Spirit who was given to all for the growth of the Church' just as at Pentecost.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁷ Xavier Rynne, *The Second Session* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 108-109.

In *Lumen Gentium* 32, echoing St Paul, the Council stressed that there was ‘in Christ and the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex’.⁵⁸ Women, as well as men, therefore, are equal within the People of God, so there should be no discrimination and as this section does not single out women, either to include or to exclude them specifically, all that applies to the laity, applies to men and women equally.

The Council Fathers were clear that it was through the reception of baptism and confirmation that ‘the Lord himself’ commissions people to the apostolate, that is, to the saving mission of the Church in the world.⁵⁹ Here they acknowledge explicitly the contribution of women in the early Christian Church’s missionary activities: ‘those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the Gospel, labouring much in the Lord.’⁶⁰ Regarding the laity, the Council is adamant that ‘the way is clear for them to share diligently in the salvific work of the Church according to their ability and the needs of the times’.⁶¹ Sharing in the priestly office of Christ, it is not the clergy, nor the Religious, but rather the laity who ‘consecrate the world itself to God’.⁶² The decree on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, also affirms that the Church ‘is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy’.⁶³ These affirmations predicate the need for opportunities for lay formation and participation in the life of the Church.

The Council elaborated on the many and varied opportunities for the laity to be prophetic figures within society. *Lumen Gentium* records lay witness in all the aspects of daily human life: in families, work, concern for social justice, and through active engagement in the development of contemporary culture. The Council credited the laity *en masse* with profound wisdom gained from the breadth of their life experience, stressing that they are ‘empowered, indeed sometimes obliged, to manifest their opinion on those things which pertain the

⁵⁸ Cf. Galatians 3:28.

⁵⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 33.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Cf. Philippians 4:3, Romans 16:3.

⁶¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 33.

⁶² Ibid., 34.

⁶³ Vatican II, *Ad Gentes divinitus* 21.

good of the Church'.⁶⁴ The 1983 Code of Canon Law would reiterate this idea.⁶⁵ The clergy are not only to be teachers and preachers; they must also listen to, learn from, and respect the laity, recognising their extensive knowledge and experience. A crucial point regarding the apostolate of the laity is made in *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 35, which states that Christ fulfils his prophetic office:

not only by the hierarchy...but also by the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and the grace of the word so that the power of the Gospel may shine out in daily family and social life.

The universal call to holiness, found in chapter five of *Lumen Gentium*, as Bernard Prusak observes, involved a 'significant shift in perspective' from the original draft prepared by the Curia.⁶⁶ No longer is holiness the preserve of the clergy or consecrated Religious persons: each member of the Church should be religious. God calls every person to what *Lumen Gentium* describes as 'the perfection of love', that is holiness, developed through imitation of the life of Jesus Christ.⁶⁷ This teaching of the Council was a key factor in the subsequent development of lay spirituality and the establishment of many new lay movements and associations within the Church. The document explores the many and varied 'forms and tasks of life'.⁶⁸ It considered opportunities for laity to develop a personal holiness that would be totally rooted in the 'love both of God and of his neighbour' which identifies the true disciple of Christ.⁶⁹

Lumen Gentium then, sees the laity as collaborators with the clergy and provides positive affirmation that this includes women too. The document emphasises the common priesthood of all the faithful, and the role of both laity and clergy in the Church's witness to the world.⁷⁰ Important factors that are relevant to any consideration of equality of persons and respectful integration of everyone into the life of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* stresses that all the

⁶⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 37.

⁶⁵ Canon Law Society of America. (Editors) *Code of Canon Law* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983) Canon 212:3.

⁶⁶ Prusak, *The Church Unfinished*, 295.

⁶⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 39.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

baptised share in the prophetic role of Christ and through the gifts of the Spirit all are called to mission, women and men, laity as well as clergy:

Alloting his gifts accordingly as he wills, he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.⁷¹

This instruction can be understood as affirming dialogue and collaboration in the Church as prerequisites to the authentic reception and full implementation of the Council's teaching.⁷²

An example of renewal is seen in the radical changes to the consecrated life in the aftermath of Vatican II, as orders looked back to their origins, and reflected on the needs of the modern world, in a search for authenticity of purpose and mission. *Lumen Gentium* was a key text for this reform. It stressed that the Consecrated Religious way of life was never merely about the development of personal holiness; rather it was always about the service of others, assisting them to holiness too.⁷³ Religious communities of women took insights addressed to them as part of the People of God as well as Religious to foster the development of their orders.⁷⁴ This led them to undertake new pastoral ministries and update peripherals, for instance by modifying their dress to reflect modern attire, with a renewed focus on internal consecration to the service of God and humanity. Religious women, and men, entered into open and frank discussions and aspects of Religious life that had encouraged attitudes of domination and infantilism within communities were removed. Religious orders initiated new methods of lifelong formation in which the full development of each human person was the goal.⁷⁵ Both clergy and laity could learn much from these initiatives.

Lumen Gentium's imagery of the Church widens in chapter seven to include the concept of the people of God being on pilgrimage on earth, constantly moving forward to the *eschaton*: the end times, when God will be all in all, and a new

⁷¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 12.

⁷² Cf. Gerald O'Collins, *Living Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 109.

⁷³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 44.

⁷⁴ For example: Ernest E. Larkin, *Religious life in light of Vatican II*, accessed October 01, 2014, <http://carmelnet.org/larkin/larkin068.pdf>. Mary Cresp, *Religious life and its evolution since Vatican II*, <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.co.au/Archive-Vatican-II>.

⁷⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 46.

creation will be realised.⁷⁶ The Council's explanation that the Church in human existence is never perfect and cannot ever be complete is important, because this implies that the Church is not static but dynamic. The former *peritus* Joseph Ratzinger interprets this as the Church 'journeying with and toward the God who constantly called out to it'.⁷⁷ The imagery of a pilgrim Church was indicative of a new ecclesial humility, according to Richard Gaillardetz.⁷⁸ The Fathers recognised that while the Church still firmly believed the Spirit led it on the path to God's kingdom, this was understood as a transitional journey that was ongoing. This perspective affirms receptivity to change and development, important elements for any advancement of women's participation.

Mary: Mother and disciple

The decision, after much debate in the *aula*, to include the teaching on Mary at the end of the document on the Church rather than in a separate document is highly significant for this thesis. A woman is not only placed within the Church: the text states she is a 'type' of the Church and 'intimately united' to it.⁷⁹ The Church is emphatically portrayed as feminine and maternal, although *Lumen Gentium* 64 relates this as: 'she brings forth sons'. The Council Fathers wanted to make Church teaching accessible and to remove ambiguities. Placing Mary within the context of the Church ensured there was no confusion between her humanity and the divinity of her son. Mary was human like all the people of God, though exemplary because of her role in salvation history as *Theotokos*, the Mother of God. As Joseph Ratzinger stressed 'Mary exemplifies the paradox of grace that touches those who cannot accomplish anything by themselves.'⁸⁰

The Council's teaching on Mary is firmly rooted in the scriptures which show Mary is the perfect disciple who co-operated with God's will, freely and positively, rather than passively.⁸¹ She is venerated as the faithful 'Daughter of Sion' who bridged the Old and New Covenants.⁸² She is portrayed as the strong and faithful woman who, by the witness of her life, gives hope and inspiration to

⁷⁶ Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 48.

⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 76.

⁷⁸ Cf. Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 56.

⁷⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 63.

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 95.

⁸¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 56.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 55.

all those who seek to follow her son.⁸³ These are important considerations for this study, because the Church has constructed much of its teaching on women around Mary as a model for the role of women in the Church. The aspects of Mary's discipleship, and active participation in the ministry of her son, provide balance to emphases on her obedience, humility, and motherhood as ideal feminine traits elsewhere in magisterial teaching. The Council promoted the veneration of Mary as a role model as well as an intercessor with Christ. However, this was always to be proportionate avoiding both 'false exaggerations' and 'too summary an attitude'.⁸⁴ These are tendencies that could also, I suggest, influence opinions on women in general.

Lumen Gentium provides a solid foundation of teaching to underpin any development of the role and responsibilities of the laity. Based on the premise of the Church as the whole People of God, a whole vista of opportunities for collaborative ministry and mission, of clergy and laity, men and women become not only possible but also essential.

Gaudium et Spes: the Church ad extra

The survey of the teaching in *Lumen Gentium* has shown clear insights that pertain to roles for the laity within the Church. However, more clarification is necessary regarding their involvement in the Church's ministry to the world. *Lumen Gentium* is the foundational document of the Council but the most inspirational, I suggest, is *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. This is the document which best fulfilled Pope John XXII's pastoral plan, and which fully embodied the spirit of Vatican II. *Gaudium et Spes* was the final document to be ratified and after *Lumen Gentium*, the one that received most consideration by the Council Fathers. Over two hundred speeches in the *aula* over three weeks showed the depth of interest it engendered for all concerned.

Commentators are agreed that the text is not perfect, being subject to both the desire of the Council Fathers to bring the proceedings to an end, and the fatigue

⁸³ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 62.

⁸⁴ *Ibi.*, 67.

they experienced after long deliberations.⁸⁵ The Council Fathers were aware of the flaws in the document at the time of voting so added a footnote explaining the structure, reiterating the pastoral and doctrinal content, while also acknowledging the transient nature of the teaching. This applied particularly to Part II, which addressed specific issues, some of which the Council was aware were ‘contingent’ due to the constant progress of human development of culture, economy etc.⁸⁶ Despite these shortcomings, *Gaudium et Spes* has been the best received of all the Council documents, a crucial factor for a teaching document. Interest came not only from within the Church, but also wider afield, and this document has been the source text for many later papal encyclicals. We shall now consider its development of themes relating to the laity and women.

Realities of human life

The content and style of *Gaudium et Spes* were not novel, but followed earlier social teaching, drawing on John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem et Terris* as key source texts. *Gaudium et Spes* exhibits a pastoral tone from the first lines:

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, these are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.⁸⁷

This serves surely as an inspirational anthem to the whole meaning and purpose of the Church’s *raison d’être*. The Church is considered within an experiential reflection on the whole of God’s creation, and the situations that affect human existence. I suggest that by being rooted in an incarnational theology that refutes any sense of dichotomy between bodily matters and spiritual entities, *Gaudium et Spes* outlines the reality of human life, and then relates it to the presence of God, to salvation history, and to the Church’s mission to bring the good news of the gospel to the world. This is a theology from below, seeking to be accessible to everyone, in ‘language intelligible to each generation’.⁸⁸ The document explicitly addresses itself not only to Catholics but also to the ‘whole

⁸⁵ See Guiseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 2006), 107, 115. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World* (New York, Paulist Press, 2005), 86-89.

⁸⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 1, Preface, Footnote 1.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Note the Latin original is ‘Gaudium et spes, luctus et angor hominum huius temporis’ - in Vatican documents ‘man/men’ is the English translation used - meaning people.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 4.

of humanity'.⁸⁹ By placing the Church firmly at the service of the entire world, the Council uses this opportunity to explain the reality of Church life that had been expounded in *Lumen Gentium* by placing it in the context of human existence.

The Church always needs to study the signs of the times, so *Gaudium et Spes* lays stress on receptivity to development as a necessary and constant factor in Church life. This occurs in tandem with an evolving dialogue with contemporary society, in order to maintain relevancy.⁹⁰ Credit is given to the amazing developments of science and technology and the growth of human knowledge. The Council acknowledges the changes in society, which had empowered the oppressed, including women, to seek involvement and voice their needs and opinions: 'The hungry nations cry out to their affluent neighbours; women claim parity with men in fact as well as of rights'.⁹¹ The bishops understand some of the questions that human life throws up, and know that humanity must face these in the light of Christ. However, they do not suggest solutions as they humbly admit that they do not have all the answers. *Gaudium et Spes* observes that despite the growth of understanding of human rights and greater social and political freedoms, there is still a 'dichotomy' in praxis that means many are denied the very freedom to which they now understand themselves to be entitled.⁹² I suggest that this teaching is directly applicable to women, who through the liberation movement had come to realise their equal status with men, and their lack of equal opportunities.

Dignity of the human person

Gaudium et Spes focuses on the dignity of the human person, asserting this to be a concept that is foundational to all Christian teaching.⁹³ This dignity is, however, profoundly gendered: according to *Gaudium et Spes*, men and women are divinely differentiated, in order that 'their partnership' can produce 'the first form of communion between persons', without which they 'can neither live nor develop' their potential.⁹⁴ This *communio* emphasises the human as a social being, and is a *leitmotif* of the whole document, identifying the dichotomy

⁸⁹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Genesis 1:27.

⁹⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 12.

existing within each person over the struggle between good and evil as the source of the ethical conflicts in society.⁹⁵

A moving paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes* speaks of conscience as ‘the most secret core and sanctuary’ of a person where they are ‘alone with God, whose voice echoes in their depths’.⁹⁶ Despite the existence of sin and evil, every person has the potential to inform and develop their consciences to make the choices that enhance life for themselves and the wider society. The Council urges the building up and sustaining of the common good, and the understanding of the human responsibilities that are inseparable from human rights. *Gaudium et Spes* beautifully describes the dignity of the human person in the scheme of creation arguing that human beings are ‘the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake’.⁹⁷

The Council Fathers identified a key concept in social teaching, that is, the dignity of work. Humans should find in employment a means of fulfilling their potential, and finding satisfaction as well as being a mechanism for earning the money they need to survive. The Council identifies as a ‘new thing’ for the current era, the understanding that people are more precious for who they are than for what they have.⁹⁸ Developing the teaching of Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (1891), this countered the modern obsession with possessions and status as the Church is urged to help people discover and develop their personal identities. It is only when people are secure in who they are, that they can respect and build relationships with others, overcoming selfishness and working for the common good. In my view, this teaching sets the framework for the establishment of effective collaborative ministry and affirms the efforts of laity who through their reflection on vocation have realised that God also calls them to engage in the Church’s mission and ministries.

Integral Development of the human person

⁹⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 13.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, cf. 16.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

The focus in *Gaudium et Spes* 41 and 42 is on the integral development of each human person.⁹⁹ People need to uncover and grow in understanding of their potential, and become aware of their rights, and the duty to respect the rights of others. These are key statements for this thesis. The Council clearly states that the Church, as the agent of the Gospel, has the duty to safeguard human flourishing and to ensure the ‘employment of human talents in the service of God and man’.¹⁰⁰ Progress towards unity between peoples is acknowledged as ‘in harmony with the deepest nature of the Church’s mission.’¹⁰¹ *Gaudium et Spes* rejects any sense of Christians being ‘citizens of two cities’, that is, of Christians thinking that they need to separate religion and society. Indeed, the Council Fathers are adamant that ‘one of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives’.¹⁰² God’s creation is intrinsically good and so capable of radiating his presence, for his kingdom is already here, albeit imperfectly as a result of human frailty. The Church acknowledges ‘the discrepancy between the message it proclaims and the human weakness of those to whom the Gospel has been entrusted’.¹⁰³ The Council’s recurrent themes of authenticity in witness and openness to reform are reiterated, acknowledging that the message is too important for obstruction by the messengers, and implying that change is needed to ensure each human person is respected and afforded equal opportunities to attain their full potential.

Contemporary issues

In the second part of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council considered some specific areas that concerned them, aware that time was limited and that the potential number of subjects needing to be addressed was vast. They chose to focus on marriage and the family, the development of culture, economic and social life, the political community and the fostering of peace. These are all topics of relevance to women as well as to men.

⁹⁹ A theme which three participants in the Council would continue to reflect on in their pontificates, see Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1967). John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987). Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 41.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Marriage and family

No longer did the Church stress that the procreation of children was the primary purpose of marriage. The sacrament of matrimony graces the man and the woman, enabling them to give mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and actions so that 'authentic married love is caught up into divine love'.¹⁰⁴ This understanding of the importance of the unitive function of marriage was neoteric. Earlier perceptions in official teaching seemed to imply that marriage was the lowest form of vocation, meant only for those lacking in continence. Concerning the transmission of human life, the Council states that it is 'the married couples themselves who must in the last analysis arrive at these judgements before God'.¹⁰⁵

Culture

According to *Gaudium et Spes*, the human race comes to a 'true and full humanity only by means of culture', where culture is understood to be everything that pertains to the realities of daily human life.¹⁰⁶ Norman Tanner explains that the bishops no longer saw the need for a specific Catholic culture. Religion was now seen to be an aspect of culture rather than separate from it so, therefore, a topic for debate.¹⁰⁷ The Council Fathers commend the 'growing number of men and women who are conscious that they themselves are the craftsmen and molders of their community's culture.'¹⁰⁸ While aware of the difficulties caused by the diversity of cultures the Council is adamant that 'human culture must evolve today in such a way that it will develop the whole human person harmoniously and integrally'.¹⁰⁹ This surely applies also to the culture within the Church.

Lay formation and involvement

The Council Fathers also exhibit a new openness to the formation of the laity, a subject that, as we will see in later chapters of this thesis, has remained a subject under discussion. *Gaudium et Spes* 62 clearly expresses the hope that lay people will be enabled to study theology and utilise what they have learned,

¹⁰⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 48.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 50.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World* (New York: Paulist Press 2005), 55.

¹⁰⁸ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 55.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 56.

with the freedom to explore and express opinions. This was a very important affirmation, which is highly relevant to the subject of this research. *Gaudium et Spes* emphasises that the human person must be given prime consideration as ‘the source, the focus and the end of all economic and social life’.¹¹⁰ Many of the concerns of social justice are discussed as the bishops no longer perceived those who worked for justice as political agitators but instead praised them for their ‘shining example’ of Christian commitment.¹¹¹ The Council acknowledged the ‘growing desire among many to assume greater responsibilities in the organization of political life’, and stressed the human rights of all citizens be a consideration in building up the common good.¹¹² The bishops were clear that government must always be at the service of the people, with politicians seeking to serve others rather than striving for status and power.¹¹³ These reflections are relevant also to governance in the institutional Church.

The constitution ends as positively as it began, addressing everyone, including non-believers. The Council reiterates that, while the document reflects traditional doctrine, there are also many areas that: ‘will have to be followed up and amplified since it sometimes deals with matters in a constant state of development’.¹¹⁴ Implicitly, this includes the issue of women, and new approaches to their participation in the Church, that would echo their equal standing with men in the wider society.

These examples clearly evidence much in both *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* that was positive and affirming regarding the laity. The Council also chose to dedicate a specific document to the lay apostolate which we must now consider.

***Apostolicam Actuositatem*: The Vocation of the Laity**

Vatican II promulgated the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, on November 18, 1965. The final document was approved in the

¹¹⁰ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 63.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, cf. 75.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

fourth session of the Council, after five years' work, by 2,340 votes with only two bishops voting against it.

The bishops addressed the issue of the lay vocation because of their awareness that in the modern world there was a need for 'an apostolate infinitely broader and more intense'.¹¹⁵ The deliberations of the Council Fathers built on the series of international congresses, held since 1951, which were specifically intended to encourage lay Catholics, in the words of Pope Pius XII, 'to consider not only their duties toward themselves, but also their duties toward the Church, civil society and all humankind'.¹¹⁶ These congresses did not articulate a precise theology of the laity, but discussed lay rights and responsibilities in response to Pope Pius XII's warning not to clericalise the laity or laicise the clergy. The question of the role of the laity also had a subtext arising from the growing concern over the increasing shortage of priests.¹¹⁷

Vatican II took a new approach. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* states:

From the fact of their union with Christ the head, flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord Himself that they are assigned to the apostolate.¹¹⁸

This teaching accords with the Council's earlier stress in *Lumen Gentium* on the Church as the 'People of God' and a new consideration in that constitution of the 'universal call to holiness'.¹¹⁹ However, the tone and content of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* are very different from the exhilarating statements of *Gaudium et Spes* and the encouragement in *Lumen Gentium*. It is important then, to consider the process of the production of this document.

Formulation

The Central Papal Commission of Vatican II delegated the preparation of a draft decree to a Preparatory Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity, which first

¹¹⁵ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 1.

¹¹⁶ Pope Pius XII, 'Address of to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate' (October 05, 1957) Introduction, 4, accessed February 01, 2014, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12LAYAP.HTM>.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* chapter 2.

met in November 1960. Ferdinand Klostermann records the topics put forward at that first meeting: the nature, extent and purpose of the lay apostolate in the light of contemporary needs; its relation to the hierarchy; and the role of organised lay groups, with a specific focus on Catholic Action.¹²⁰ Three sub-commissions were set up, each with a specific topic to consider, a division of labour that brought with it inherent complications. Nonetheless, eighteen months later, the Council received the first draft. The Council Fathers called for many abbreviations and expansions and engaged in a spirited debate on the subject of Catholic Action. A second version was formulated, which after debate and discussion, and with papal approval, became a new draft document of 92 articles and 48 pages, which was sent to the Council for response in April 1963. The Council Fathers wanted to meet the pastoral requirements of the Council with a more succinct text, so they postponed any consideration of the decree on the laity until the third session of the Council.

Cardinal Cento presented the new draft to the Council in October 1964. The bishops greeted it with severe criticism. Some, such as the American Cardinal Joseph Ritter and the Canadian Bishop Joseph De Roo, called for it to be re-written because it was ‘still too clerical in tone, too juridical in concept, too diffuse and general, and that it did not correspond to modern needs’.¹²¹ The first lay person, Patrick Keegan, was allowed to address the Council. As reported by Guiseppe Alberigo, Keegan called for a closer relationship between the decree on the laity and chapter four of *Lumen Gentium*, to avoid ‘limiting the varieties of the lay apostolate through excessively detailed prescriptions’.¹²² The final text, which was substantially different from the earliest draft, was finally approved in 1965 with, as Klostermann reports, the fewest dissenting votes of the whole Council.¹²³

Common priesthood

The Council Fathers’ aim in the decree on the laity is clear from the opening line of the document: ‘to intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God’.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Cf. Ferdinand Klostermann, ‘Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity’, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 3, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 273.

¹²¹ Klostermann, ‘Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity’, 291.

¹²² Guiseppe Alberigo, *A brief history of Vatican II* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 71-72.

¹²³ Cf. Klostermann, ‘Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity’, 302.

¹²⁴ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 1.

Thus, the decree attempts to provide a concise description of the lay apostolate that will ‘state fundamental principles, and give pastoral directives for its more effective exercise’.¹²⁵

From the beginning, Vatican II’s understanding of the common vocation of all the baptised is reiterated, in a ‘diversity of ministry but unity of mission’.¹²⁶ The bishops understood mission as a right and duty for laity as for clergy, as all Christians were initiated into the common priesthood at baptism, and were constituents of the Body of Christ and his ‘holy people’.¹²⁷ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* states that every Christian is tasked with the ‘noble obligation of working to bring all men throughout the whole world to hear and accept the divine message of salvation’.¹²⁸ To enable lay people to be fruitful in apostolic works, the Council views the continuing development of their spiritual lives to be essential, asserting that every Christian needs to deepen their relationship with God if they are to be effective witnesses to the world of his love and mercy.¹²⁹ These are important factors for this thesis, articulating a belief in the importance of lay formation and involvement in the Church’s mission.

Lay role in society

In line with the mandate of Vatican II to place the Church at the service of humanity, this decree emphasises the role of the laity in establishing and building up the common good.¹³⁰ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is clear that while ‘the work of Christ’s redemption concerns essentially the salvation of men; it takes in also, however, the renewal of the whole temporal order’.¹³¹

The Church had long emphasised the secular nature of lay involvement, albeit usually seen as subject to hierarchical oversight.¹³² Clergy and Religious were understood to be involved with affairs within the Church, while lay people were delegated involvement with the world. This compartmentalised mind-set is still

¹²⁵ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 1.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹²⁷ 1 Peter 2:4-10.

¹²⁸ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3.

¹²⁹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 9; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4.

¹³⁰ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 4.

¹³¹ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 5.

¹³² Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* 22.

evident in the decree on the laity, even though the text states that there are opportunities for lay involvement in both.¹³³

Apostolicam Actuositatem 9 acknowledges the changing role of women within society, and articulates the need to involve them more in the Church's apostolate. No detail is given however, of how this could be accomplished.

Paragraph ten speaks for the first time of 'cooperation' between clergy and laity, seeing this as not only welcome but necessary in the new situations the Church must engage with in the modern world. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*'s statement that the laity 'can conduct the apostolate of like toward like' in secular society precipitates negative connotations.¹³⁴ Readers could infer that the Council considered clergy as incapable of addressing the needs of the world. They could also assume that the bishops did not consider that the lay faithful were capable of responding to the needs of the Church to which they belong.

Apostolicam Actuositatem 14 states that 'Catholics' should collaborate 'with all men of good will'. The decree also defines 'genuine fraternal exchange' as that 'in which each party is at the same time a giver and receiver'.¹³⁵ This implies surely that every member of Christ's Church needs to collaborate in their mission to each other, and to the positive development of the societies in which they live. Yet, as Klostermann would argue, the bishops considered matters solely in light of their own position, that is, their state and experiences were used as the norms for judgement.¹³⁶ For followers of Jesus Christ, should he alone not be the root of any discernment? The differences in states of life are only the faithful living out of different charisms for we are all, in the words of Paul, 'one in Christ Jesus'.¹³⁷

The decree on the laity states that individual apostolic activity is right and proper, although the focus in this document unfortunately was on organised activity, i.e. in lay associations, specifically those approved by or controlled by the hierarchy e.g. Catholic Action. Before Vatican II, the lay apostolate was

¹³³ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹³⁵ Klostermann, 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity', 14.

¹³⁶ Cf. Ibid., 314.

¹³⁷ Galatians 3:28.

understood as assisting clergy with their mission. The deliberations of the Council moved beyond this, to an understanding that lay people had a right and duty to ministry because of their baptism and confirmation.¹³⁸ There was even a renewed appreciation that, due to a shortage of priests in some situations, lay people would be the only solution.¹³⁹ The Council Fathers retained the emphasis in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* that the laity should only function ‘under the superior direction of the hierarchy’.¹⁴⁰ It would seem that the more progressive bishops settled for consensus in the debate over this section.

Lay role in the Church

Vatican II was tasked with opening the Church to development, but the bishops involved appreciated that this might not be harmonious.¹⁴¹ They knew that involving the laity more in the mission of the Church would require a re-education of the clergy and a close oversight of any pastoral collaboration if this were to be achievable.¹⁴² Despite the bishops’ understanding that the continuing spiritual and theological formation of the laity was paramount, they do not indicate how lay people were to access or fund such formation.¹⁴³

Apostolicam Actuositatem 29 echoes the principles of Catholic social teaching and Cardinal Cardijn’s ‘see, judge, act’ methodology. This decree is thus linked into the wider body of Church teaching, authorising concrete actions which provide a witness to the world of the values of the gospel.

The decree ends with an exhortation to the laity to respond generously to this invitation from the Church to participate in the apostolate of the Church as ‘co-operators’.¹⁴⁴ However, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* gives no indication of how practically the Church should welcome and utilise this response.

Analysis

¹³⁸ Cf. Richard P. McBrien, *Report on the Church: Catholicism after Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publications, 1992), 89.

¹³⁹ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 17.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 28-32.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

Apostolicam Actuositatem contains much that is positive, though little that is really innovative. The language of the document is frequently ambiguous and confusing, possibly because as Ferdinand Klostermann suggests, the Council Fathers wanted to avoid any definitive responsibility regarding the implementation.¹⁴⁵

Apostolicam Actuositatem does not engender any sense of empowerment or inspiration but rather feels incomplete, with more questions than answers. Perhaps the reason for its flawed nature is that it lacks the participation and insights of the very laity it addresses. It is also the product of many parts, a synthesis of compromises which, while necessary, reduce the strength and impact of the teaching. These indicate a work in progress, with clear vision and definitions still to be worked out.

Klostermann states that the final document reflects the often very different points of understanding and appreciation of the laity held by the bishops.¹⁴⁶ This decree, was intended to be a general overview rather than a detailed application, as the Council was aware of the need to take account of historical and cultural differences. The consensus at the final vote indicates that the bishops were content that they had achieved a balance, which enabled them to publish a document that could continue the debate, rather than finalise the matter. There is affirmation of the positive teaching on the laity in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, but no deeper analysis of a theology of the laity or development of the practicalities of greater lay involvement in pastoral ministries.

Challenges and compromises

The documents of Vatican II can never be considered as systematic treatises because they are at root insufficient documents. They are the product of a process, aimed, above all, at achieving consensus from over two thousand participating bishops holding conflicting viewpoints. John O'Malley is clear: 'the very comprehensiveness of the documents and their care not to offend, as well as their concern to satisfy various constituencies, militated against their being

¹⁴⁵Cf. Klostermann, 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity', 312.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 353.

assumed by any individual as passionately as his own'.¹⁴⁷ Many bishops returned home after the council still unsure what implementation was necessary and why. Pope Paul VI had urged the need for unanimity, and the price was the insertion of alternative formulations, sometimes juxtaposed within the same paragraph. This led to confusion in later analysis but could still be a sign of hope for progressives, as Hermann Pottmeyer argued: 'by being complemented, the older thesis is relativized as one-sided, and bearings are given for further development in understanding of the faith'.¹⁴⁸

It is important to remember that Vatican II was an opportunity for many bishops to update their own theological understanding. Learning opportunities occurred not only through the debates in the *aula* but also in the discussions in the *Bar Jonah* and *Bar Abbas* in the intermissions, in the meetings of the various language groups, and in the workshops led by theologians all across the city.¹⁴⁹ Alberic Stacpoole wonderfully describes Rome at that time as 'one big theological 'think-in' or at least 'listen-in'.¹⁵⁰ Xavier Rynne, reports that Pope John told a group of bishops from Pakistan: 'nobody around here knows how to run a council, and the reason is simple, none of us has ever been to one before'.¹⁵¹ In this light, the achievements of the Council were even more remarkable, and symbolic of the effects that dialogue and collaboration can bring, both vital factors for this thesis.

The Council spent more time debating the content of *Lumen Gentium* than any other document. The Fathers considered it fundamental that the inner life of the Church, its nature and identity, had to be defined before consideration could be given to the *missio ad gentes*, the relationship of the Church to others. In *Lumen Gentium*, we find a vibrant new ecclesiology of *communio* and the common priesthood of all the People of God, alongside traces of the earlier hierarchical and juridical ecclesiology. Just as with scriptural exegesis, no simplistic or literal interpretation of the text can provide a full understanding,

¹⁴⁷ John W. O'Malley, 'Developments, Reforms and two great Reformations', *Theological Studies* 44 (1983): 399.

¹⁴⁸ Hermann Pottmeyer, 'A New Phase in the reception of Vatican II' in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo et al. (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 38.

¹⁴⁹ Dennis Hurley, *Vatican II - Keeping the dream alive* (South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2005), 24.

¹⁵⁰ Alberic V. Stacpoole, 'Introduction' in *Vatican II by those who were there*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 13.

¹⁵¹ Xavier Rynne, *The Second Session* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 28.

although these methods can provide proof texts for opposing ideological camps to use in support of their opinions. There is a presumption of development, as well as the acknowledgement of the responsibility of each generation to present the truths of faith in understandable terms. It is particularly in the light of *Gaudium et Spes* that a deeper understanding of *Lumen Gentium*'s teaching may be found. The latter is assertive while the former is exploratory, yet when read in tandem, a fuller exposition of doctrine can be gleaned. There can be no purpose for the Church without the world, just as there is no purpose for a hierarchy without the lay faithful. The Council's stress on the importance of reading the signs of the times brought to light, according to Drew Christiansen, 'a theological perspective for social analysis in which inequality emerged as the major social problem of modern times, and the affirmation of human solidarity provided the theological warrants for an egalitarian social order'.¹⁵² This is surely an indication that the Church needs to address and remove inequality within its membership, so that it can authentically witness to the wider world; an important point for this thesis.

We have seen that while *Gaudium et Spes* may be incomplete it is more than the sum of its parts. Norman Tanner's assertion that the Council's open and pastoral approach and the positive tone of this document were of much more importance than specific details seems a valid one.¹⁵³ I suggest that this is why *Gaudium et Spes* has continued to be of interest, and the subject of study by so many people. Any document composed in committee must invariably be flawed, but due credit should be accorded to what it did say, rather than criticism given for what it omitted. Inspiration and a prophetic voice are provided, and dialogue may develop within the Church especially if it can foster the culture that *Gaudium et Spes* advocated of 'mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, and acknowledge all legitimate diversity'.¹⁵⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* is clear: 'the deposit and the truths of faith are one thing, the manner of expressing them is quite another'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Drew Christiansen, 'On Relative Equality: Catholic Egalitarianism after Vatican II' *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 653.

¹⁵³ Cf. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World*, 63.

¹⁵⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 92.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

Gaudium et Spes regards as a sign of the times ‘new social relationships between the sexes’.¹⁵⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* uses the generic man or men to mean humanity, therefore including women too just as the term ‘People of God’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘the Church’ to indicate the inclusivity of all the baptised.

One of the first concrete developments from *Gaudium et Spes* was the formation of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. There was a deepening understanding, later ratified by the 1971 Synod of Bishops, that work for social justice was not an optional extra but intrinsic to the values of the Gospel. This had an impact on the calls for discussion about the participation of women around the world, since national Justice and Peace Commissions instigated much of the research on this subject, as we shall see in chapter three.

Event and process

Those who had attended the Council knew they had been part of something momentous. Various accounts written afterwards, leave no doubt as to how far they had come, as individuals and as a collegial body, in understanding and embracing a new ecclesiology. Dennis Hurley exemplifies this, writing that at the closing liturgy: ‘there was brotherhood. There was community. There was a catch in many voices’.¹⁵⁷ The then Bishop of Portsmouth, Thomas Holland, also recorded his impressions: ‘it was a massive human and humanizing experience ... provincial minds were broadened; naïve reactions met their challenge ...’.¹⁵⁸

After the council, Pope Paul VI was adamant that there should be no backsliding, as his address to the curia in 1966 makes clear:

Whatever were our opinions about the Council’s various doctrines before its conclusions were promulgated, today our adherence to the decisions of the Council must be whole hearted and without reserve...The Council was something very new: not all were prepared to understand and accept it. But now the conciliar doctrine must be seen as belonging to the magisterium of the Church and, indeed, be attributed to the breath of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 8.

¹⁵⁷ Dennis Hurley, *Vatican II - Keeping the dream alive*, 146.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Holland, ‘The Council comes of age’ in *Vatican II by those who were there*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 59.

¹⁵⁹ Paul VI, ‘Address to the Roman Curia’ (23 April, 1966) <http://www.vatican2voice.org>.

Richard McBrien suggests a theological principle to counter any apparent inconsistencies or omissions from the texts of the Council. That is, that while the official documents of the Church are authentic declarations of the truths of the faith, they can never be fully adequate or complete expressions.¹⁶⁰ The Council clarified two key principles that affect how we now receive and interpret the teaching: the reality of a hierarchy of truths, that is that some truths are more foundational than others, and the acceptance that there is a continuing development of doctrine. The limits of language, and the necessity of making the gospel values continually accessible and relevant, necessitates persistent reflection and explication by the Church as a whole. Pope Benedict XVI was a *peritus* at Vatican II and addressed the subject of exegesis in his account of the proceedings, where he noted:

it seems to me that we would basically misunderstand the meaning of any Council text were we to demand that it reflect all valid theological points of view...beware of theological perfection! It might not leave room enough for future development.¹⁶¹

The Council Fathers moved from a pre-conciliar image of the Church as hierarchical institution, to one of a pilgrim people of God, journeying through human life in communion, seeking to build a society of truth, justice and peace. However, Vatican II could only present what Walter Kasper describes as ‘the indispensable frame of reference’, the synthesis of which is ‘a matter for the theology that comes afterward’.¹⁶² The process of the Council had been lengthy and demanding, with an honest and open sharing of a very wide spectrum of views and positions. It did not merely divide bishops into traditionalist or progressive camps in a simplistic way, but rather showed a contrast between opinions based on historical ideology or juridical ideology. Indeed, Joseph Ratzinger could write in defence of the progressives that they were ‘in fact concerned precisely with Tradition, with a new awareness of both the breadth and depth of what had been handed down in Christian Tradition’.¹⁶³ This new ecclesiology and openness to the other, I would argue, also provides the framework for a consideration of the greater participation of laity, and particularly of women, in the Church.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Richard P. McBrien, *Report on the Church: Catholicism after Vatican II* (New York: Harper Collins Publications, 1992), 4.

¹⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 107.

¹⁶² Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 58.

¹⁶³ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 172.

Reception

The Church received the teaching of the Council of Nicea (325) only after fifty years. According to Paul VI, Vatican II was the ‘largest’, the ‘richest’, the ‘most opportune’ and ‘without doubt among the greatest events of the Church’.¹⁶⁴

Paul VI further stressed that the Church needed to disseminate and study the documents of the Council if they were to achieve ‘full and complete effect’ being ‘fully con-validated by those whom they concern’.¹⁶⁵ Here he was echoing Cardinal Newman’s image of the ‘breathing together of the faithful and pastors’, in order that the Church can be truly ‘one’, and ‘catholic’, embracing the gifts of all the People of God.¹⁶⁶

Some may have ignored or forgotten Vatican II, yet, as O’Malley argues, it remains highly relevant because of what it has to say about the Church’s internal structure and function, and about the Church’s relations with the world in each age.¹⁶⁷ There is continuing debate of continuity versus rupture regarding Vatican II: did it instigate revolution or renovation. Evolution is inevitable in our human world, so Newman’s dictum suggests a more helpful perspective: ‘to live is to change and to be perfect is to change often’.¹⁶⁸ The reception of Vatican II by the entire faith community, that is an ecclesial reception, is needed to enrich the Church. As Richard Gaillardetz argues: ‘in the act of receiving the faith, the people of God make that faith their own and, in doing so, add something to the faith’.¹⁶⁹

Örsy’s opinion that Vatican II was both a source of inspirational teaching and an event of conversion seems to have validity. The Council Fathers acted in response to the prompting of the Spirit and were inspired to embrace new possibilities in relation to the needs they had identified.¹⁷⁰ This *metanoia* is required of all those who receive the Council, not only with St Anselm’s *fides*

¹⁶⁴ Paul VI, *In Spiritu Sancto*, Apostolic brief (08/12/1965), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19651208_in-spiritu-sancto_en.html.

¹⁶⁵ Paul VI, *In Spiritu Sancto*.

¹⁶⁶ John H. Newman, *On consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine* (1859, reprint Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1961).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. John O’Malley, ‘Introduction’ in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?*, ed. John O’Malley, et al. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2008), 23.

¹⁶⁸ John H. Newman, *An Essay on the development of doctrine* (New York: Longmans Green, 1909), 40.

¹⁶⁹ Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 113, cf. *General Directory for Catechesis* 78.

¹⁷⁰ Örsy, *Receiving the Council*, 84.

quarens intellectum but also with what Örsy describes as *fides quarens actionem*.¹⁷¹ This is faith in action, because as scripture attests ‘faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead’.¹⁷²

In his closing speech, Paul VI stated that the promulgation of the documents was not an ending, but ‘the beginning of the human and religious renewal’ of the whole People of God to better serve the world.¹⁷³ The continuing theological study and research of Catholic women and men is surely an intrinsic part of that renewal.

The Women of Vatican II

No account of the Council that seeks to elicit its stance on the participation of women in the Church could fail to mention the twenty-three women who attended the Second Vatican Council as Observers.

Reporters focused on few of these *Auditoras* at the time of the Council, or wrote about their experiences afterwards. It is only through the meticulous research of Sr. Carmel McEnroy who tracked them down across fourteen countries, that we have access to their personal accounts. McEnroy also used the extensive files compiled by Rosemary Goldie for the Pontifical Council of the Laity archives, to complete her seminal work *Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II*.¹⁷⁴ The title alone speaks volumes about the perception of women in the Church at the time of the Council.

The women chosen as *Auditoras* attended the Third and Fourth sessions of the Council, thanks to the intervention of Cardinal Suenens. They were either leaders of Religious congregations or in senior positions in lay Catholic organisations. On September 25, 1964, Marie-Louise Monnet from France was the first woman to enter the council. Twelve other laywomen later joined her: Luz-Marie Alvarez-Icaza, Rosemary Goldie, Ida Grillo, Gertrud Ehrle, Catherine McCarthy, Alda Miceli, Pilar Bellosillo, Marchesa Amalia di Montezemolo,

¹⁷¹ Örsy, *Receiving the Council* 22.

¹⁷² James 2:17.

¹⁷³ Paul VI, ‘Closing speech of Vatican II’ (7th December 1965).

¹⁷⁴ Carmel McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House: The Women of Vatican II* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996).

Margarita Moyano Llerena, Gladys Parentelli, Anne-Marie Roeloffzen and Baroness Hedwig Skoda. Ten Religious women completed the group: Sr. Constantina Balducci SC, Sr. Jerome Maria Chimy SSML, Sr. Cristina Estrada ACJ, Sr. Claudia Feddish OSBM, Sr. Henriette Ghanem SSCC, Sr. Suzanne Guillemain DC, Sr. Marie de la Croix Khouzam RESC, Sr. Juliana Thomas ADJ, Sr. Mary Luke Tobin SL and Sr. Sabine de Valon RS.

The ‘Council Mothers’ had no vote and no voice in the *aula*. They were however allocated prime seats in the St Andrew’s Tribune in St Peter’s beside the *peritii*, the theological experts at the Council. The novelty of the presence of women at first drew attention from the speakers who addressed them specifically as *carissimae sorores* (beloved sisters) or *pulcherrimae auditices* (beautiful listeners) but this paternalistic hyperbole was as short lived as the flurry of media attention.¹⁷⁵ However, it gives an indication both of the hierarchy’s total lack of understanding of the role of women in the Church, and of the social conditioning relating to women, which most of its members had undergone.

In 1967, one of the Auditoras, Rosemary Goldie, from Australia, became the first woman to hold a curial post in the Vatican as undersecretary for the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Her memoir, *From a Roman Widow: five decades: the world, the church and the Catholic Laity*, gives a powerful account of the growth of dialogue among those who were involved in the network of lay movements and organisations in the 1950’s and 60’s. Goldie remembers that: ‘theologically articulate lay people in English speaking countries were reacting against any clerical or monastic monopoly of spiritual life’.¹⁷⁶ One fruit of this surge of lay involvement was the empowerment of the many women involved. Those laywomen who participated in the Council came from this constituency.

Paul VI gave permission for the *Auditoras* to be involved in some of the commissions of the Council that would be discussing matters of special interest for the life of women. Goldie comments: ‘we could not help wondering what aspects of the Church’s life are not of interest to women. Surely women are

¹⁷⁵ Cf. McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 109.

¹⁷⁶ Rosemary Goldie, *From a Roman Window: five decades: the world, the church and the Catholic Laity* (Sydney: Harper Collins Religious, 1998), 53.

also “the Church”?’¹⁷⁷ She was involved in the committee considering the document on the laity and is significantly credited with the inclusion of the statement in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: ‘Since in our days women are taking an increasingly active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that their participation in the various sectors of the Church’s apostolate should likewise develop’.¹⁷⁸ An example of the lack of empathy experienced by women is reported by Sr Luke Tobin, who together with Goldie was a part of the commission working on the document that would become *Gaudium et Spes*. Yves Congar had composed a ‘flowery’ piece on women, which he thought was supportive and empowering until Goldie rebuked him: ‘we do not need any of that grandiose stuff that has no basis in women’s reality. All we want is to be treated as full human beings, accorded the same equality as men’.¹⁷⁹ We shall see in later chapters that this sentiment is still expressed by many Catholic women today regarding hierarchical statements about women.

The mere presence of the *Auditoras* highlighted some of the ludicrous ideas prevalent at that time. For example, in St Peter’s, two coffee bars had been set up for delegates to use at the break times, dubbed *Bar Jonah* and *Bar Abbas*. However, the women were not permitted to use these, so a separate coffee bar was established, subsequently referred to as *Bar None*. The Vatican did not allow men into *Bar None* until the married couple Jose and Luz-Marie Alvarez-Icaza managed to force a rescinding of the ban, though few clergy ventured past the red velvet curtains in search of congenial conversation.¹⁸⁰ However, bishops and priests did encounter the women in the many gatherings and meetings held outside of the council sessions without any adverse effects.

Donna Orsuto, a lecturer at the Gregorian University, recently asserted that the *Auditoras* had three phases of influence: in the run-up to Vatican II, at the Council itself, and in the reception of the Council’s teaching afterwards. These phases she described as planting, nourishing, and harvesting the fruits of Vatican

¹⁷⁷ Goldie, *From a Roman Window*, 71.

¹⁷⁸ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 9.

¹⁷⁹ McEnroy, *Guests in Their Own House*, 10.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 101-103.

II.¹⁸¹ The *Auditoras* were not alone in this harvest, as the legal experts in the Church wanted to apply the new insights from the Council to the juridical life of the Church. We shall now consider these developments in the Code of Canon Law as they pertain to the role of the laity.

The Code of Canon Law

Pope John XXIII had indicated that part of his *aggiornamento* would be a revision of the Code of Canon Law (*Codex Iuris Canonici*) promulgated by Pope Benedict XV in 1917. This work could only begin after Vatican II had finished its deliberations to ensure the canonists could take any changes or developments made by the Council into account. The *Pontificia Commissio Codici iuris canonici recognoscendo*, established in 1963, spent twenty years over the revising of ecclesiastical laws and regulations. This culminated in the promulgation of the new Code in January 1983 by Pope John Paul II, who called it the 'last document of the Council'.¹⁸² The Pope also made clear: 'what constitutes the substantial "novelty" of the Second Vatican Council, in line with the legislative tradition of the Church, especially in regard to ecclesiology, constitutes likewise the "novelty" of the new Code'.¹⁸³

Any discussion of the teaching of Vatican II on the laity needs to include relevant juridical statutes, particularly, Book 2 of the Code of Canon Law, which focuses on the People of God, and Canons 204-223, which apply to all the faithful.

In canon 204:1 the definition of the Christian faithful is articulated as those who 'incorporated in Christ through baptism, have been incorporated as the People of God'. This is not specific to Catholics, as Vatican II recognised a common Christian baptism.¹⁸⁴ Hence, the need for the supplementary clarification of canon 305: 'those baptized are fully in the communion of the Catholic Church on this earth who are joined with Christ in its visible structure by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical governance'.

¹⁸¹ Donna Orsuto, 'The women of Vatican II' Lecture in 'Remembering the Women of Vatican II', John L. Allen, *National Catholic Reporter*, October 12, 2012, accessed January 01, 2013, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/remembering-women-vatican-ii>.

¹⁸² John Paul II, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*, Vatican, 25/01/1983.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_25011983_sacrae-disciplinae-leges_en.html

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Canon 204:1.

Canon 207:1 stresses that it is by 'divine institution' that the Church is divided into the separate spheres of clergy and laity. Before considering the juridical positions of each state of life, the Code outlines those rights and responsibilities which are shared by all. This echoes the formulation of *Lumen Gentium*, focusing on the commonalities for all the baptised before any consideration is given to the particularities relevant to the clergy or laity. Canons 208-223 expound the obligations and rights of the Christian faithful and powerful affirmation is given of the 'true equality' of all the faithful.¹⁸⁵ Everyone shares in the common call to holiness.¹⁸⁶ Everyone participates in the mission of the Church.¹⁸⁷ Of particular relevance to the laity is canon 212:3, which states:

According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige, which they possess, they[all the baptised] have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters, which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful.

This powerful statement comes with the caveat that this right is to be exercised 'without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons'.

In addition to these rights of all the baptised, canons 224-231 refer specifically to the lay Christian faithful. Here the duties of married people and parents are elucidated. The laity have the duty 'to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel and thus to give witness to Christ'.¹⁸⁸ Canon 230:1 is the only one specifically to refer to laymen: it restricts the ministries of lector and acolyte to men. Laywomen are not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the Code: therefore, it is assumed that the terminology 'lay persons' means women as well as men.¹⁸⁹ This opens up the possibilities of women studying theology, taking up ministries, and receiving formation for 'special service in the Church'.¹⁹⁰ Laywomen can also be involved in any work that ensures 'that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Canon 208.

¹⁸⁶ Canon 210.

¹⁸⁷ Canon 216.

¹⁸⁸ Canon 225:2.

¹⁸⁹ For example, <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/canonlaw.html>.

¹⁹⁰ Canon 231:1.

¹⁹¹ Canon 225:1.

Elsewhere in the Code, there are sections that relate to laity who engage in various ministries within the Church. Again, there is no gender exclusiveness here. Suitably qualified women and men can be appointed to such ecclesiastical offices as diocesan chancellor or notary.¹⁹² Canon 483:2, does however, stipulate that in the case of a legal action against a priest the notary must be a cleric. The Code permits laity to be involved in Tribunals as judges, auditors and relators, defender of the bond or procurators or advocates, although these persons must be 'outstanding for their good character, prudence, and doctrine'.¹⁹³

The Code makes provision for laity to preach if the situation demands it.¹⁹⁴ They can also exercise some of the same ministries as a Deacon: including leading the ministry of the Word, witnessing marriages, and administering baptism and sacramentals.¹⁹⁵ Lay catechists, both men and women, in some parts of the world sustain local faith communities by exercising exactly these ministerial functions with no priest in the vicinity. In other areas, not only in missionary situations, bishops have authorised laity in accordance with Canon Law to act as parish administrators.¹⁹⁶

All this would indicate that the revised Code of Canon Law, in line with the teaching of Vatican II, shed a new and positive light on the role of the laity. It clearly supports the participation of lay people irrespective of gender in the life of the Church, including Canon 129:2 states, at the level of governance. Nevertheless, as canon lawyers would attest, implementation is always dependent on interpretation, and it may be that some clarification of the Code is necessary to allow the laity to actually exercise leadership function.¹⁹⁷

Summary

This chapter has provided an exploration of the conciliar process at Vatican II and an analysis of the content of key documents pertaining to the role of the

¹⁹² Canon 482-483.

¹⁹³ Canon 1428:2. Interestingly, there is no reference to these same criteria being required of clerics appointed to these offices, character and competence are only criteria in Canon 521 regarding the position of parish priest.

¹⁹⁴ Canon 766.

¹⁹⁵ Canons 759, 1112, 861:2, 116:8.

¹⁹⁶ Canon 517:2.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. James Coriden, 'Lay Persons and the Power of Governance', *The Jurist* 59 (1999): 335-347.

laity. Both are necessary to fully grasp the nature of this teaching of the Church in relation to laymen and women.

The Council clearly evidenced both theological support and juridical validation for the participation of the laity in the Church, without any explicit exclusion of women, as exemplified here in the Council's teaching and the subsequent redrafting of the Code of Canon Law. The equal dignity of both women and men is a constant motif.

Key themes have emerged which relate to the subject of this thesis. The Council stressed the need to be open to change, while keeping continuity with the wisdom of the past, that is, combining both *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*. The emphasis in all the documents of Vatican II is about reading the signs of the times and adapting the presentation of Church teaching while retaining doctrinal authenticity. There is a new awareness of the need for the Church to engage with the world and to accept societal developments such as the new emancipation of women. The Church exhibits a willingness to admit both its failings and limitations, thus accepting that elements of its praxis need to improve to address the contemporary needs of humanity.

Vatican II consistently emphasised the need for the Church to give authentic witness, be inclusive and of service to humanity, not least by involvement in the integral development of human persons. Discrimination is condemned, the gifts and charisms of every person are endorsed, and authority is redefined as service. The Council did not articulate a specific theology of the laity at that time, but their deliberations on the Church arguably provided a legacy that would give scope for discussion in the future. The focus was on the laity's vocation in 'temporal affairs' and the 'ordinary circumstances of social and family life', to the neglect of due consideration of their place within the ecclesial institution.¹⁹⁸ The specific Council decree on the apostolate of the laity may be disappointing and incomplete. However, it did place new emphasis on cooperation between clergy and laity, and credited a role for the laity within the Church as well as in society. The Fathers were clear that while the Council's deliberations had ended, the work of interpretation and implementation was to be ongoing, so

¹⁹⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 31.

whatever the inadequacies of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, it was a positive foundation for a work still in progress.

Mention has been made of the pioneering women who attended the Council yet who remain widely unknown. Their presence set a precedent that matched in importance the inclusion of ecumenical observers at the Council, and demonstrated the potential for change in the attitude of the institutional Church to women. Another crucial factor was the reformulation of the Code of Canon Law, which took forward the Council's positive appreciation of new roles and responsibilities for laity, irrespective of gender. Although many of these precepts still need clarification and implementation in order for the potential to be fulfilled, the juridical mandate for inclusive lay participation does exist. All of these factors indicate that there should therefore, have been subsequent development in considering how to open up opportunities for women after the Council. Chapter two will now investigate whether this was in fact the case.

CHAPTER 2: THE 'GENIUS OF WOMEN' -

Post Vatican II development of Church teaching on the participation of women in the Church.

'Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him'. (Ps 37:7)

Introduction

Chapter one analysed key documents from Vatican II and uncovered positive teaching relating to the laity, including women, and their role within the Church. A next step is to investigate the Church's reception of these texts in the post-conciliar period and to explore subsequent developments of the teaching on the laity and women. This chapter will therefore consider a selection of Church documents written in the period after the Council, which are of relevance to the question of the vocation of the laity and the participation of women in the Church. These are: Pope John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem* and *Letter to Women*, because they are frequently cited and have an ongoing impact on the ecclesial mentality regarding women; and *Christifideles Laici*, for its similar impact on attitudes towards the laity. In addition it will consider three documents produced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*, *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World*, and *Ecclesiae de Mystero*, all of which pertain to the ministries and participation of laity in the Church. This chapter will present a summary of the key points of each of these documents, considered in the chronological order of publication, and will examine how the teaching they contain develops the findings of chapter one from the Council Fathers.

Women and ministry: *Inter Insigniores* (1976)

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued the Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood, *Inter Insigniores*, on October 15, 1976, a decade after Vatican II.¹ This document begins with an exploration of the contemporary position of women in society. It cites *Pacem et Terris* and *Gaudium et Spes* to highlight both the importance of this question for the Church and the need to overcome any discrimination which could impede a

¹ Previously known as the Holy Office, this Congregation's purpose is to defend the faith against doctrinal error.

culture of equality between women and men.² Credit is given to the women of the past who contributed so much to the Church, great female saints are identified, and the multitude of women who consecrated themselves in Religious orders are affirmed, and 'Christian wives' rate a mention too.³

In *Inter Insigniores* the CDF recognised that the teaching of the Council had already permeated to local level with greater involvement of the laity, seen as a positive development. However, the CDF had concerns that in the more ecumenical environment, also initiated by the teaching of the Council, women are now petitioning for the same involvement in pastoral ministry as men. In other Christian denominations, women had been accepted into the ordained ministry, which for the CDF constituted an ecumenical problem. This had led theologians and others to ask why ordination should not equally be open to women in the Catholic Church. It was in response to this, and with the Pope's mandate, that the CDF issued *Inter Insigniores*, a statement of position. In it, the CDF stated categorically that the Church 'in fidelity to the example of the Lord does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination'.⁴

For the CDF, Jesus' connections with women, which the gospels record as happening throughout his public ministry, witness to his practice as a radical departure from the cultural restrictions of the time. Yet, despite his openness to women, Jesus' chose only men to be apostles. The CDF viewed this decision as proof that the Church must consider this practice as immutable. The early Christian communities may have involved women in ministry, as the Acts of the Apostles and Pauline letters attest, but for the CDF this involvement was always different to that which pertained 'exclusively to the apostolic mission'.⁵

It is striking that the CDF mentions that the institutional Church considers itself to have 'a certain power of the sacraments'; citing the Council of Trent in reference to changes that had been made in the way they were administered

² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Inter Insigniores* in *Vatican Council II More Postconciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery. (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1982) Introduction.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

over the years. Notwithstanding, this is qualified by the reminder that the Church has no authority to change the ‘substance’ of the sacraments, and that the Magisterium is the ultimate arbiter of the mind of Christ.⁶ The mediatory role of the clergy: part of the substance of the sacrament of Holy Orders, is further enhanced by the understanding that they are sacramental signs, that is, tangible expressions of the Son of God who became incarnate as a man. Underlying this exposition is a theological anthropology of sexual difference, which precludes women from being able to act *in persona Christi*:

in actions which demand the character of ordination and in which Christ himself, the author of the Covenant, the Bridegroom and Head of the Church, is represented, exercising his ministry of salvation which is in the highest degree the case of the Eucharist—his role (this is the original sense of the word “persona”) must be taken by a man.⁷

The CDF’s aim in this declaration was to prohibit any further debate on the matter of women’s ordination whilst leaving the question of the lay vocation and apostolate, and within it the particular role of women, open for reflection by the Pope and bishops. It is this reflection, which we shall now consider.

The dignity and vocation of women: *Mulieris Dignitatem*

On August 15, 1988, Pope John Paul II issued an Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women, *Mulieris Dignitatem*. The Synod of Bishops, which had been held in Rome in October 1987 to discuss ‘The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council’, had called for study of the anthropology of men and women and this letter was partly in response to that call. The letter was also issued to mark the Marian Year, 1988: *Mulieris Dignitatem* is primarily a theological reflection on the role of Mary, although it also considers the position of women in general.

The Pope explained that women’s dignity and vocation, while they had always been ‘a subject of constant human and Christian reflection’ had since Vatican II also received increasing consideration by the institutional Church.⁸ He cited Paul VI’s setting up of a commission to study women’s issues, and the same Pope’s declaration of Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila as Doctors of the

⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Inter Insigniores* 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 1.

Church in 1970, as examples of this new recognition of the value of women, and of a new appreciation of their sphere of responsibilities.

Pope John Paul echoed the claim of Paul VI, that Christianity 'more than any other religion' has affirmed the dignity of women.⁹ The Pope evidences this from the New Testament, suggesting that women were equally valued with men in the first Christian communities, and as involved in following the missionary mandate of Jesus to 'go into all the world and proclaim the Good News'.¹⁰ However, scholars of women's history have not always agreed with this view. The vast range of literature on this subject suggests that the view presented by *Mulieris Dignitatem* is somewhat over simplified.¹¹ Over the subsequent centuries, with the greater demarcation of roles between clergy and laity, women were no longer equally affirmed or involved.

The second chapter of *Mulieris Dignitatem* is an exploration of Mary as *Theotokos*, that is, mother (or 'bearer') of God as well as mother of Jesus. In this teaching, John Paul II first identifies the 'extraordinary dignity of [this] woman', who then becomes the 'archetype' not only of all women, but also of the whole human race, as humanity is understood to achieve full dignity only in union with God.¹² This idea is considered further in chapter three, in which John Paul II explores the scriptural teaching of the equal dignity of woman and man in the accounts of their creation in God's image found in Genesis.¹³ Vatican II had stressed that humans, because they are created in 'the image and likeness of God' are the only creatures that God willed for their own selves.¹⁴ In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the Pope further explores this idea, discussing the mutuality of relationships between men and women and the 'interpersonal communion' between them, which, he argues, reflects the trinitarian life of God and the

⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 1. cf. Paul VI, Address to National Meeting of the CIF, December 06, 1976.

¹⁰ Mark 16:1.

¹¹ For example, Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *The Image of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the early Church* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1980); Francis Martin, *The Feminist Question: feminist theology in the light of the Christian tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

¹² John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*: 3-4.

¹³ Genesis 1:27.

¹⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 24.

perfect *communio* of the divinity.¹⁵ From this starting point, John Paul II develops his emphasis on the spousal relationship between man and woman, ‘in the “unity of the two”, man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist “side by side” or “together”, but they are also called to exist mutually “one for the other”.’¹⁶ For John Paul II, one consequence of original sin is that it destroys the perfect relationship between man and woman as willed by God, and replaces the equality of persons by the domination of man over woman.¹⁷ He states categorically: ‘these words of Genesis refer directly to marriage, but indirectly they concern the different spheres of social life: the situations in which the woman remains disadvantaged or discriminated against by the fact of being a woman’.¹⁸ John Paul II acknowledges the growth of the global human rights movement and its impact on women’s rights but warns against any liberation that would suggest women should become more like men in character or behaviour, as this would be ‘contrary to their own feminine originality’.¹⁹ John Paul II does not specify what is original in the feminine, but does stress that men and women are essentially different, and that it is only within their own particular essence that each gender can reach fulfilment. Léonie Caldecott interprets John Paul II’s teaching: ‘there is still subjection, still obedience, still a distinction of roles, still complementarity, but it is a mutual subjection and therefore not “oppressive”.’²⁰ I disagree, as any subjection could negate the recognition of the dignity of the other, exemplified in the writing of Thomas Aquinas who agreed with the concept of a woman as a ‘misbegotten male’:

Subjection is twofold. One is servile, by virtue of which a superior makes use of a subject for his own benefit; and this kind of subjection began after sin. There is another kind of subjection, which is called economic or civil, whereby the superior makes use of his subjects for their own benefit and good; and this kind of subjection existed even before sin. For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.²¹

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10, Genesis 3:16.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Léonie Caldecott, ‘Sincere Gift: The Pope’s New Feminism’, *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23.1 (Spring 1996): Section III, 64-81.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1092.htm>. I.92.1.

The sacramental grace of baptism, which remits original sin, allows men and women to be open to relationships of mutuality and equality. Any form of subjection is surely contrary to the Christian belief expressed in Galatians 3:28 that all are now 'one in Christ Jesus'.

In a much more positive section, John Paul II focuses on the gospels and what they tell us of Christ's interaction with women, which was constantly counter-cultural and even considered scandalous. The Pope highlights the women of faith recorded in the scriptures, who came to Jesus seeking healing for themselves or their children.²² He also mentions the individual women who feature in the gospel accounts, calling the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well 'one of the most beautiful in the gospel'.²³ John Paul II devotes the whole of paragraph fourteen to the story of the woman caught in adultery, recognising that often it is the woman who is considered the sinner, when actually there is a man involved in the sin too. Encouragingly, he relates this story to the real life situations of women who are pregnant and alone, or who have been victims of sexual exploitation. He calls on men to examine their consciences and consider whether they treat women as persons or as objects. In a lyrical passage, John Paul II identifies the sense in scripture that women were close to Jesus because they found in him the keys to their own identity. This is a crucial point for our consideration of the role of women in the Church:

Christ's way of acting, the Gospel of his words and deeds, is a consistent protest against whatever offends the dignity of women. Consequently, the women who are close to Christ discover themselves in the truth, which he "teaches" and "does". ... Christ speaks to women about the things of God, and they understand them; there is a true resonance of mind and heart, a response of faith.²⁴

John Paul II goes on to stress the faithfulness of the women who accompanied Jesus in his ministry, who remained when the male apostles took fright and left him, and so became the first witnesses to the resurrection. However, John Paul II's perception is that this fidelity comes from the feminine mystique of devotion and sensitivity, rather than from the women's strength of faith, courage, and sense of responsibility. This section ends with two endorsements. The first is

²² Lk 13:11; Mk 1:30; Mk 5:25-34; Mk 5:27; Mk 5:34; Mk 5:41; Lk 7:13; Mt 15:28.

²³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 10, cf. John 4:7-27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

derived from the prophet Joel, and affirms that since both men and women receive the gifts of the Spirit, so both men and woman can be prophets.²⁵ This is a sentiment endorsed by Thomas Aquinas:

Prophecy is not a sacrament, but a special gift of God. Because in her soul, a woman is not different from a man - indeed one can find women whose souls are better than those of many men - a woman can also receive the gift of prophecy and similar gifts, but not the sacrament of ordination.²⁶

The second, drawn from St Paul, asserts that through Jesus there are no longer restrictions between men and women.²⁷ However, although John Paul II writes positively that ‘the fact of being a man or a woman involves no limitation’, he then undermines this idea in the next section on motherhood and virginity, where these are portrayed as the key dimensions by which women can find fulfilment.²⁸ The Pope considers women in their mysterious roles of virgins, mothers, and spouses yet nowhere in his writings is there an equivalent exploration of men as virgins, fathers, and husbands.

The eighth chapter explores a feminine conceptualisation of the Church as virgin, bride of Christ, and mother. This approach seems to me, indicative of a mentality that equates the Church with men, rather than with the whole people of God. There is an implicit lack of understanding that motherhood and marriage are roles that women do not take on in isolation, but that these roles are rather fundamental collaborative engagements between men and women. Positive relationships between women and men underpin marriage and parenthood. Virginity does not exclude healthy relationships between men and women; indeed the single life will only be fulfilling if there is openness to others, and to community.

In the last chapter of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, focused on love, John Paul II suggests that amid the changes in the modern world many realities do not change.²⁹ The implication that some of these ‘immutable truths’ apply to women leads to the definition of the essence of women’s dignity in paragraph 29: ‘the dignity of woman is measured by the order of love’. The Pope’s earlier affirmation of

²⁵ Joel 3:1.

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, suppl. III, qu. xxxix, art 1, ad. 1.

²⁷ Galatians 3:28.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

women's role as prophets is here constricted to a 'special kind of prophetism' that is intrinsic to femininity. He then reduces this further in paragraph 30: 'woman can only find herself by giving love to others'. The Pope is here reiterating the basic Christian tenet to love God and others, yet men seem to be neglected: as loving others is equated with femininity, and indeed with the fundamental vocation of women. The strength of women is acknowledged, but is predicated on the fact that 'God entrusts the human being to her in a special way'.³⁰ John Paul suggests that because of women's gratitude for this special entrusting of humanity to them, they have the strength to bear the discrimination or social injustice they encounter.³¹ What appears at first sight to be positive affirmation of women's dignity and value is devalued by the portrayal of the 'perfect woman', as one who is 'an irreplaceable support and source of spiritual strength for other people'.³² *Mulieris Dignitatem* concludes with a eulogy of praise and thanksgiving from the Church to every woman. This again implies that women and the Church are separate entities. Amongst the euphemistic tributes there is at least a call for women to assume 'together with men, a common responsibility for the destiny of humanity'.³³

This document is a puzzle. Most worrying for the concerns of this thesis, is the unconscious dislocation and repositioning of women as if they were outside of the Church, allowing them to be addressed by the Church. This approach has negative implications for men too, for it detaches them from the vocation to love and nurture others. Moreover, it does not appear to value virginity or chastity for men. *Mulieris Dignitatem* contains passages that affirm the fundamental equality of women with men, and their right and responsibility to be included and involved in the Church's mission to the world. However, it also contains passages that stress the essential difference between men and women, setting each apart, and consigning to each very different function. Within his idealised conceptualisation of marriage and the family, John Paul II delineates only two dimensions to the 'fulfilment of the female personality': motherhood and virginity.³⁴

³⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 30.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 31.

³⁴ Ibid., 17.

The Lay Vocation: *Christifideles Laici* (1988)

Pope John Paul II also authored the Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World, *Christifideles Laici*, promulgated on 30th December 1988. John Paul II hoped *Christifideles Laici* would ‘stir and promote a deeper awareness among all the faithful of the gift and responsibility they share...in the communion and mission of the Church’.³⁵ As Tim Muldoon points out, the Pope’s exhortation records a considerable development of the hierarchy’s understanding that the laity too had ecclesial roles to play.³⁶

Labourers in the Lord’s vineyard

Christifideles Laici is divided into six sections: with chapters focused on the dignity, participation, co-responsibility and the formation of the laity.

A *leitmotif* throughout the document is the parable of the labourers and the vineyard as recorded in chapter 20 of Matthew’s gospel. The laity are ‘those who form that part of the People of God which might be likened to the labourers in the vineyard’. The ‘vineyard’ represents the whole world, ‘which is to be transformed according to the plan of God’.³⁷ This is in line with the Council’s teaching, which described the Church as the ‘universal sacrament of salvation’ and opened the Church to a new sense of responsibility for the world at large.³⁸ Consequently, through ‘a renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost’, the Church must strengthen its missionary character and endeavours, involving clergy and laity alike.³⁹

John Paul recalls the work of Vatican II on the lay faithful in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, repeating that is the Lord himself who ‘renews his invitation to all the lay faithful to come closer to him every day... with the recognition that what is his is also their own’.⁴⁰ The Synod wanted to develop this understanding and address the challenges of finding: ‘concrete ways through which this rich “theory” on the lay state expressed by the Council can be translated into

³⁵ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 2.

³⁶ Cf. Tim Muldoon, *Catholic Identity and the Laity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 6.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 48.

³⁹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 2.

⁴⁰ Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 33, cf. Phil 2:5.

authentic Church “practice”.⁴¹ To this end, the bishops welcomed the participation of lay delegates who, as John Paul II acknowledged, enriched the Synod because of ‘their experience, their advice, and the suggestions they have offered’.⁴² In the post-conciliar period, the Church had already witnessed signs of new collaborative efforts between clergy and laity across the world, particularly in liturgical ministries, catechesis, and lay involvement in many areas of pastoral outreach. Mention is made of the growth of new lay ‘movements’ and of the ‘fuller and meaningful participation of women in the development of society’.⁴³

While *Christifideles Laici* lauds the advances rooted in the teaching of Vatican II, it also identifies the failings of the laity or, as John Paul II designates them, the ‘temptations’ they face.⁴⁴ Two in particular are mentioned: firstly, an over-emphasis on Church responsibilities that leads to a neglect of responsibilities to culture and society. Secondly, the danger of separating faith from life, that is, promoting the gospel without living out gospel values.⁴⁵ Aware of the many needs in the contemporary world, there is a need to involve everyone in service, as ‘it is not permissible for anyone to remain idle’. Laity are reminded that they too must ‘take an active, conscientious and responsible part in the mission of the Church’.⁴⁶

The truths found in Revelation are augmented, according to John Paul II, by the ‘voice of the Lord’ that ‘clearly resounds in the depths of each of Christ’s followers, who through faith and the sacraments of Christian initiation is made like to Jesus Christ’.⁴⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*’s teaching on the Church’s involvement in the joys and sorrows of a common humanity are here reaffirmed.⁴⁸ The Pope stresses that there is no dichotomy between Church and world, for the Church must always be what scripture calls salt and light for the world, be fully involved

⁴¹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 2.

⁴² John Paul II’s Homily at the closing Mass of the Synod, October 30, 1987, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1987/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19871030_conceleb-finale-sinodo_it.html

⁴³ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁴⁸ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 1.

and present in every situation, if it is to fulfil its sacramental function.⁴⁹ Yet, because the world is always in flux, the document warns: ‘it is all the more necessary to guard against generalisations and unwarranted simplifications’.⁵⁰ Building on the central tenet of Catholic Social Teaching, of the equal value and dignity of every person, the document stresses the need for opposition to anything which reduces a person to a mere object. Seeing women and children as most at risk of such objectification, the Synod wanted Church members to be ‘leading characters’ in the development of whatever would counter this warped version of ‘humanism’.⁵¹

In its entirety, therefore, *Christifideles Laici* does advance the study of the laity begun at Vatican II, but what does it contribute to the specific themes that we uncovered in chapter one?

The equal dignity of the laity

The opening chapter focuses on the dignity of lay people as a means to explore more fully both who they are, and what they are called to do in God’s plan of salvation. *Christifideles Laici* places this calling clearly within the Church:

only from inside the Church’s mystery of communion is the ‘identity’ of the lay faithful made known and their fundamental dignity revealed. Only within the context of this dignity can their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world be defined.⁵²

The Synod had recognised that the ‘dignity of the person constitutes the foundation of the equality of all people among themselves’, and as a result, reports John Paul II, ‘the bishops deemed all forms of discrimination as completely unacceptable’.⁵³ *Christifideles Laici* identified among key concerns of the Church, the family as the ‘basic cell of society’ and the need for witness to Christian values in political and economic affairs regarding these as especially the responsibility of the laity.⁵⁴ I would argue however, that this could imply an exclusion of clergy and religious from these areas of concerns when they should be, and in reality frequently are, equally involved.

⁴⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 1; Mt.5:13-14.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 3.

⁵¹ Ibid. cf. *Instrumentum Laboris* 5-10.

⁵² Ibid., 8.

⁵³ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38; 39; 40; 42; 43.

Christifideles Laici, using the scriptural imagery of Matthew 20, regards the laity as ‘branches’ of the vine, totally integrated and united to the person of Christ, thus women and men, clergy and laity are clearly placed ‘inside’ the Church. *Christifideles Laici* gives a ‘basic description of the lay faithful’, which reaffirms faith in Christ and Baptism as the sources of being Christian therefore; every member of the Church is at root lay.⁵⁵ The later reception of the sacrament of Orders or the consecration to the vowed life of Religious can set some apart, yet this does not negate the shared consciousness of the faithful that Pope Pius XII had identified: ‘not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church’.⁵⁶

Participation

The definition of the lay state as normative, rather than the clerical state, opens up a new vista of ecclesiology.⁵⁷ Through baptism, each person is sealed with the Holy Spirit and endowed with the grace that makes them children of God. This makes them co-heirs with Christ, and thus participants in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission.⁵⁸ This is so important that John Paul II urged the laity: ‘to take up again and reread, meditate on and assimilate with renewed understanding and love, the rich and fruitful teaching of the Council which speaks of their participation in the threefold mission of Christ’.⁵⁹ Central to this understanding is an emphasis on *koinonia* or communion, which has been revealed by scripture and is upheld by Tradition. The Synod tried to ‘bring about a clearer understanding of the Church as communion and its concrete application to life’.⁶⁰ The bishops argued that, if the Church became a communion of saints, in communion with God and with humanity, then the Church could be a sacrament of God’s presence among his people for ‘communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other’.⁶¹ This concept of *koinonia* is very important for the implications it has for collaborative ministry in the Church.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 9.

⁵⁶ Ibid. cf. Pius XII. ‘Discourse to new cardinals’ (February 20, 1946).

⁵⁷ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2004). 112.

⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 14; cf. 1Peter 2:4-5,9.

⁵⁹ Ibid.14.

⁶⁰ Ibid.19.

⁶¹ Ibid.32.

St Paul's imagery of the Church as the body of Christ had been echoed in *Lumen Gentium* 7. *Christifideles Laici* reiterates that the Church is 'characterized by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities'. Therefore: 'every member of the lay faithful is seen in relation to the whole body and offers a totally unique contribution on behalf of the whole body'.⁶² This acceptance of diversity and complementarity is a vital argument for the equality of women within the Church, which John Paul II would further endorse by his statement that 'what distinguishes persons is not an increase in dignity, but a special and complementary capacity for service'.⁶³ Indeed, *Christifideles Laici* stresses service, *diakonia*, over authority: 'pastors must always acknowledge that their ministry is fundamentally ordered to the service of the entire People of God'.⁶⁴ Reflecting canon 230, John Paul II suggests: '[when] necessity and expediency in the Church require it, the Pastors ... can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry but do not require the character of Orders'.⁶⁵ However, immediately after this affirmation of the involvement of lay people in the Church, John Paul II warns against

a too-indiscriminate use of the word 'ministry', the confusion and the equating of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood, the lack of observance of ecclesiastical laws and norms, the arbitrary interpretation of the concept of 'supply', the tendency towards a 'clericalisation' of the lay faithful and the risk of creating, in reality, an essential structure of parallel service to that founded on the Sacrament of Orders.⁶⁶

The Synod had urged the creation of Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Synods as means of 'collaboration, dialogue and discernment...and in certain instances in decision-making'.⁶⁷ In contrast, John Paul II stresses that the Church: 'while always having a universal dimension, finds it's most immediate and visible expression in the parish'.⁶⁸ In his understanding, laity are not only constituents of the parish community, but must also be involved in its mission and maintenance, thus ensuring that each parish is 'a "place" in the world for the community of believers to gather together as a "sign" and "instrument" of the

⁶² John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 20.

⁶³ John Paul II, Homily at closing Mass of 1987 Synod (30/10/1987).

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 22.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 23.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 25 cf. Propositio 10.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 26.

vocation of all to communion, in a word, to be a house of welcome to all and a place of service to all'.⁶⁹

However, the parish is not the only place of lay engagement. Although appreciative of all the diverse groups engaged in charitable works the Pope also identifies dangers inherent in allowing organisational growth without monitoring:

Paradoxically, such charity is made increasingly necessary the more that institutions become complex in their organization and pretend to manage every area at hand. In the end, such projects lose their effectiveness as a result of an impersonal functionalism, an overgrown bureaucracy, unjust private interests, and an all-too-easy and generalised disengagement from a sense of duty.⁷⁰

The institutional Church has a role to play in commenting on secular society, however, I suggest, that the Church could, indeed should, begin by applying such advice to its own praxis first.

Christifideles Laici also considers the various groups who are 'stewards' of the grace given them by God. The witness of older people with their acquired experience and wisdom complements and completes the importance of young people, who as prophets of hope, are called to challenge the status quo and bring vitality and inspiration to the community.⁷¹ Interestingly, these are sentiments echoed in the findings of the qualitative research considered in chapters three and four of this thesis advocating inter-generational collaboration.

The sections on women and men are most relevant to this current thesis. Besides the question of the role of the laity, a particular focus for the bishops was the dignity and vocation of women. They wanted to acknowledge 'the indispensable contribution of women to the building up of the Church and the development of society', and to develop Vatican II's identification of women's new status as one of the signs of the times.⁷² In the Synod's summation they had stated: 'the dignity of women, gravely wounded in public esteem, must be restored through effective respect for the rights of the human person and by

⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 27.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 48, 46, 47.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 49.

putting the teaching of the Church into practice'.⁷³ In their discussions of how to involve women in 'active and responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church' the bishops were adamant that the teaching contained in the documents of Vatican II only had to become praxis to allow this to happen.⁷⁴ The Synod credits the greater consciousness of the vocation of women within the Church, to the Council's re-examination of everything in the light of the Scriptures, and the history of the Christian community. Particularly they stressed: 'the word and example of Jesus Christ, remains the necessary and decisive point of reference'.⁷⁵ In this light, the Synod was totally unambiguous when it made a 'precise recommendation' that the Church should not only identify the multitude of gifts that the laity, men and women, possessed, but also that these should be utilised for the betterment of the Church.⁷⁶ The bishops emphasised the Church's public recognition and criticism of discrimination and marginalisation of women in society.⁷⁷ In *Christifideles Laici*, the Pope in his turn, addresses the role of women within the Church, clearly affirming that: 'only through openly acknowledging the personal dignity of women is the first step taken to promote the full participation of women in Church life as well as in social and public life'.⁷⁸

Reflecting on the teaching in the Book of Genesis about God's plan for every human, male and female, John Paul II called for:

more penetrating and accurate consideration of the anthropological foundation for masculinity and femininity with the intention of clarifying woman's personal identity in relation to man, that is, a diversity yet mutual complementarity, not only as it concerns roles to be held and functions to be performed, but also, and more deeply, as it concerns her make-up and meaning as a person.⁷⁹

He suggested the use of his *Letter to Women*, the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, and *Mulieris Dignitatem*, as tools for this exploration of the development of Church teaching. The Catholic hierarchy paid heed to this recommendation, and continues to facilitate debate and research, for example, in the various

⁷³ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 49, cf. Propositio 47.

⁷⁴ Cf. Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 9. This vital point endorses the position of this thesis on the importance of the teaching of Vatican II for Catholic women.

⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 49.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Cf. Propositio 46.

⁷⁷ For example *Familiaris Consortio* 24, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 74, 109-10

⁷⁸ Ibid. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 49.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 50.

conferences and publications organised over the years by the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

John Paul II was keen to encourage the Church to move from theory to practice and urged differentiation between what he called the ‘values and requirements that belong to the enduring essential aspects of women and those bound to evolve in history’, to discover the proper place of women within the Church.⁸⁰

The Pope was adamant that Christ’s words and actions are ‘normative for the Church’.⁸¹ Therefore, Jesus’ inclusion of women in his ministry and the involvement of women at pivotal moments such as the crucifixion, the resurrection, and Pentecost witnesses to equality between men and women.⁸²

John Paul II reiterated that the Spirit of God is given equally to women and men, as the prophet Joel testified: ‘I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, your sons and daughters shall prophesy’.⁸³ The Pope echoes the Synod Fathers recommendation that ‘without discrimination women should be participants in the life of the Church, and also in consultation and the process of coming to decisions.’⁸⁴ Women are credited with involvement in many areas of Church life and affirmed as ‘co-operators in the mission of the Church’.⁸⁵ This was a huge leap forward from the deliberations at Vatican II and a clear mandate for appropriate lay involvement in governance.

In *Christifideles Laici* John Paul II draws attention to the Code of Canon Law and its authorisation of the increased participation of women in Church life and mission to the world and recommends greater study of these juridical precepts to increase awareness and implementation.⁸⁶ He also stresses that the participation of women is essential for each woman’s personal fulfilment and her faithful living out of her God-given vocation. Yet, as with so many Vatican documents, *Christifideles Laici* then backtracks by singling out two main areas where women should be involved: women bear the responsibility for the conjugal life and motherhood, and also for maintaining ‘the moral dimension of

⁸⁰ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 50.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Lk 8:2-3, 23:49, 55, 24:1-10. Acts 1:14.

⁸³ Joel 3:1.

⁸⁴ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 51 cf. Propositio 47.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 51.

culture'.⁸⁷ This is a retrograde step from the position of Vatican II, where the Fathers had identified these roles as being the responsibility of all the laity, both men and women.⁸⁸ Indeed *Christifideles Laici* 52 records that 'many' bishops were concerned by too much focus on the status and role of women, to the neglect of men, and the Pope comments on the 'absence or the scarcity of the presence of men' from many areas of Church life. We shall see in the research findings in later chapters that these have remained concerns for the hierarchy.

Formation

The final chapter of *Christifideles Laici* focuses on the formation of the lay faithful, highlighting the importance of providing laity with appropriate opportunities for preparation and study, in order to ensure that their subsequent activities are authentic and can be effective. The Synod clearly affirmed that such lay formation 'must be placed among the priorities of a diocese'.⁸⁹ The Synod proposed formation as 'not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all', allowing everyone to have the opportunity of becoming equipped and empowered to contribute to the life of the Church.⁹⁰

Christifideles Laici's teaching has already been partially fulfilled in the lives of many laywomen, who often at the cost of considerable personal sacrifice, studied theology and discovered for themselves the truth of the Synod's recognition: 'the more we are formed and the more we feel the need to pursue and deepen our formation, still more will we be formed and be rendered capable of forming others'.⁹¹

Christifideles Laici is a critical document for any study of the laity containing as it does many important insights and affirmative teaching. Yet, as with the teaching of Vatican II, in the contemporary Church, many of its insights seem honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Nonetheless, regardless of the Church's failure to translate inspired theory into transformative praxis, the days of a laity who were valued only for their prayer and their financial contributions are gone forever. With an increasingly theologically educated

⁸⁷ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 51.

⁸⁸ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 36.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹⁰ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 63.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

laity, the subject of their active participation and collaboration in the Church is permanently on the agenda. Moreover, in the years after this Synod, the subject of women in the Church remained a focus of discussion within the Church, not least because women's issues were such matters of concern both for other denominations and for secular society. It is therefore appropriate to consider also some later texts.

John Paul II and Women

In June 1995 Pope John Paul II issued a *Letter to Women* on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference on Women of the United Nations which was to be held in Beijing the following September. Before we examine this text, it is helpful to set the scene by considering a letter written by the Pope in May that same year to Mrs Gertrude Mongella, then Secretary General of the conference.

In his letter to Mrs Mongella, John Paul II begins by stressing the importance of human rights and the acceptance of the equal dignity and value of women, which must underpin any debate. Here he claims:

as most women themselves point out, equality of dignity does not mean "sameness with men". This would only impoverish women and all of society, by deforming or losing the unique richness and the inherent value of femininity.⁹²

The basis of this claim is unclear. Had the Pope canvassed the opinions of 'most women', and if so, how? Did the remainder of the world's women believe they were the same as men? This generalisation, although highly problematic, is very revealing of John Paul II's position.

Having made this claim, John Paul II then presents the perspective of the institutional Church, which values femininity by urging respect for the role of motherhood. He stresses the importance of stable families for the good of society, while asserting that the Holy See does not by this mean to limit women's activities to the home. In addition, he itemises many of the difficulties women face in their lives, including exploitation, focusing on experiences in the secular world, with no mention of any difficulties for women within the Church.

⁹² John Paul II, *Letter to Gertrude Mongella*, (May 26, 1995), [18http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19950526_mongella-pechino_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19950526_mongella-pechino_en.html).

The Pope does acknowledge the expansion of women's involvement in the world of work, but he sees their equality with men in this sphere as something that 'will continue to be problematic as long as the costs continue to burden the private sector'.⁹³ It seems odd that that only the (generally lower) wages of female workers could pose an economic problem.

The Pope ends his letter with an acknowledgement of the impact the conference deliberations could have on millions of women around the world. He sounds a warning note about the need to avoid 'the reefs of exaggerated individualism'. He advises that 'great sensitivity is required in order to avoid the risk of prescribing action which will be far removed from the real-life needs and aspirations of women, which the Conference is supposed to serve and promote'.⁹⁴ One wonders what Mrs Mongella made of this, when a common perception of those outside the Church is that the Holy See quite frequently decrees actions for Catholic women with little consideration for the realities of their lives.

Letter to Women

John Paul's later letter opens with his desire to speak to 'every woman' about what it means to be a woman in the modern world, a process he describes as a 'dialogue' although he gives no indication of the forum by which women can enter into the conversation with him. There are echoes of *Mulieris Dignitatem* in the second paragraph's paeon of gratitude to women for their contributions as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and consecrated women. Mention is made specifically of 'women who work', and this categorisation immediately begs the question of what other women do with their time. John Paul II finishes exuberantly with thanking women for simply being women.

The Pope's approach seems more realistic when he explores the historical social structures that have prevented women from being able to achieve their full potential. Not only does John Paul II regret the failings of those Christians who had a role in marginalising women, but he also advocates a change of attitude:

⁹³ John Paul II, *Letter to Gertrude Mongella*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision.⁹⁵

John Paul II also draws attention to the exclusion of women's participation and achievements from historical records, mainly authored by men, recognising that women were nonetheless present and making a contribution. He also observes, rightly, that 'many women have been and continue to be valued more for their physical appearance than for their skill, their professionalism, their intellectual abilities, their deep sensitivity; in a word, the very dignity of their being'.⁹⁶ An important affirmation of all that women can contribute to the Church and the world.

Against this backdrop, the Pope acknowledges the role and influence that women need to have if society is to tackle and solve issues of social justice. He also specifies the problems of sexual exploitation and violence against women as of great concern. Although he defines abortion as a grave sin, he adds a compassionate and just caveat: 'before being something to blame on the woman, it is a crime for which guilt needs to be attributed to men and to the complicity of the general social environment'.⁹⁷ John Paul II expresses admiration for women who have bravely campaigned for equality and justice even 'when this was considered extremely inappropriate, the sign of a lack of femininity, a manifestation of exhibitionism, and even a sin'.⁹⁸ He also mentions the women's liberation movement in terms that are affirming, portraying it as a journey that has been 'substantially a positive one' and one that should continue.⁹⁹ However, he asks those who work for women's rights to focus more on the positive promotion of women, rather than on condemning areas of discrimination.

In section ten, the Pope returns to the 'genius of women' concept that he had outlined in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, stressing women's role as a helper to men,

⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Letter to Women* 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

modelled perfectly by Mary whose life was one of total service to God and others. In this context, John Paul II suggests that authority should be always understood as service, a sentiment that he had also expressed in his Holy Thursday letter to priests earlier that year, which recommended that priests should reread *Mulieris Dignitatem* to aid their personal reflections on the role of women as ‘co-workers in the apostolate’.¹⁰⁰ It would be interesting to discover whether clergy followed this admonition.

The *Letter to Women*, in common with John Paul II’s other reflections on the feminine gender, includes much that is positive and affirming. At the same time there are also elements that are patronising or confusing. It is notable that John Paul II wrote a number of other letters, addressed to children, to the elderly, to artists, to consecrated persons, and to families, but no letter specifically addressed to men. Disappointing as some of the letter may be, at least John Paul II acknowledged that work to develop the full and equal participation of women with men was vital: ‘this journey must go on!’¹⁰¹

John Paul II’s focus on women continued in his subsequent writings. For example, on World Communications Day, 19th May 1996, John Paul II chose as his theme: ‘The Media: Modern Forum for Promoting the Role of Women in Society’. In his message the Pope gave credit to the media for their positive influence in the modern world, but also upbraided them for their part in the exploitation of women: ‘How often are they treated not as persons with an inviolable dignity but as objects whose purpose is to satisfy others’ appetite for pleasure or for power?’¹⁰² John Paul II also sanctioned the Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) to bishops on the *Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, issued on 31st May 2004, which we will now consider.

¹⁰⁰ John Paul II, *Letter to Priests* (Holy Thursday 1995), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_25031995_priests_en.html.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰² John Paul II, *Message for World Communications Day* (May 19, 1996), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_24011996_world-communications-day_en.

On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World

This document is very different in tone and perspective to John Paul II's teachings on women. In it, the CDF wanted to address 'certain currents of thought which are often at variance with the authentic advancement of women' and to offer 'the essentials of a correct understanding of active collaboration, in recognition of the difference between men and women in the Church and in the world'.¹⁰³

The CDF makes clear from the outset that this document is an instruction intended to correct the feminist agenda. It interprets 'new approaches' to issues concerning women as aimed only at setting women and men in opposition to each other. Rather than any positive promotion of equality between the sexes, the CDF interprets developments focused on reversing the gender imbalance in terms of women seeking to usurp power for themselves. The CDF also blames feminists for obscuring the differences between men and women, and, through gender theory, promoting a new 'polymorphous sexuality'.¹⁰⁴ The CDF blames this on by original sin, which is responsible for the loss of equality and respect between men and women. The spousal imagery, used by John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* and in his catechesis on the Theology of the Body, is reproduced here to argue that sexual difference is 'a fundamental component of personality'.¹⁰⁵ Paul's teaching to the Galatians is reinterpreted to mean that the distinctions between men and women are in fact reinforced, with only the enmity between them removed by baptism.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the CDF assert:

From the first moment of their creation, man and woman are distinct, and will remain so for all eternity. Placed within Christ's Paschal mystery, they no longer see their difference as a source of discord to be overcome by denial or eradication, but rather as the possibility for collaboration, to be cultivated with mutual respect for their difference.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, in the light of the perspective that motherhood and caring for others should be women's key concerns, the CDF sees problems for women in the workplace that do not apply to men. Additionally, in its assessment of a culture

¹⁰³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the world*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 12. Cf. Gal 3:27-28.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

among women that, it suggests, considers all men as enemies, the CDF shows its lack of understanding of feminist theology and of the reality that women fall in love, marry, and have children with men. Women, including feminist women, live with, work with, socialise with men the world over. This is hardly the behaviour of antagonists. The polemical tone of the document ends however, with a more positive comment on the fact that feminine values are actually human values. Paragraph fourteen, unequivocally states: ‘every human person, man or woman, is destined to be for the other’.

Additionally, the CDF, in a sweeping indictment of all those sympathetic to the feminist perspective, expresses its concerns about feminist criticism of patriarchy and condemnation of male-dominated culture, which it perceives as an implicit criticism of scripture and of God, here identified with the male personas of Father and Son.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the CDF advocates ‘active collaboration’ between men and women, employing scripture, including Genesis, Hosea, Isaiah, and the Song of Songs to explain the Church’s teaching on the human person.¹⁰⁹ The account of creation in Genesis 2 is taken as a proof text for supporting the role of women as helpmates, whose destiny is to exist for others, and whose human fulfilment is through service.¹¹⁰ The document considers feminine values in society, particularly women’s capacity ‘for others’, seeing this as a counterpoint to what it describes as ‘feminist rhetoric’, that concentrates on women’s own needs and desires. Graciously, the CDF concedes that no one should define women by their role in procreation, but then suggests that virginity is the only other vocation.¹¹¹ For the CDF the passivity and passion of Mary provide an example of how women can participate in the Church. The CDF reiterates that while only men can be ordained to the ministerial priesthood this does not prevent ‘women’s access to the heart of Christian life’, though the text fails to offer suggestions as to how this would come about.¹¹²

The document’s conclusion states that ‘the Church certainly knows the power of sin at work in individuals and in societies, which at times almost leads one to

¹⁰⁸ CDF, *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the world* 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁰ Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012) 211.

¹¹¹ CDF, *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the world* 13.

¹¹² Ibid., 16.

despair of the goodness of married couples'.¹¹³ This comment seems especially inappropriate as the spectre of clerical sexual abuse had already hit the headlines, and reports of clerical abuse had been sent directly to the CDF. This strange and inflammatory statement, to my mind, undermines the legitimacy of the text as a whole.

Ecclesiae de Mystero

The Interdicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de Mystero, On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest*, issued on 15th August 1997, addressed the collaboration of the laity and clergy in ministry. The Prefects and Secretaries of all eight pontifical Congregations or Councils signed this highly unusual document, which was then ratified by John Paul II.¹¹⁴ This consortium of Vatican agencies arose because of their common concern for the emergence of certain pastoral practices which they considered to have 'serious negative consequences', and which were damaging 'the correct understanding of true ecclesial communion'.¹¹⁵ The document sets new norms, or reinforces existing ones, to end what are perceived to be abuses by the laity, particularly in liturgical functions. The document clarifies the terminology of 'minister' and ministries', and reiterates the essential difference between the ordained ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of all the baptised. *Ecclesiae de Mystero* emphatically states that 'the ordained priesthood is absolutely irreplaceable', and that any liturgical functions exercised by laity are always 'extraordinary'.¹¹⁶

Emphasising that the Church is not bound by political correctness or societal norms, *Ecclesiae de Mystero* references the Code of Canon Law to make clear that laity have no right to exercise any function that pertains to the ministry of the ordained.¹¹⁷ Article 1:3 of the Practical Provisions states that it is 'unlawful'

¹¹³ CDF, *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the world* 17.

¹¹⁴ These were the Congregations for the Clergy, for the Doctrine of the Faith, for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, for Bishops, for Evangelisation of Peoples, for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and the Pontifical Councils for the Laity and for the Interpretation of Legislative texts.

¹¹⁵ Congregation for the Clergy et al, *Ecclesiae de Mystero* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997) Interdicasterial Instruction.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 cf. Canons 230, 228.

for laity to use the title ‘chaplain’, or any other title that might confuse their role with that of a cleric. Article 4 permits laity to collaborate in parish pastoral ministry, but only when there is no other possibility: retired priests and deacons must take precedence. Article 13 stipulates the criteria of worthiness and capability that those laity chosen to perform ‘extraordinary’ functions must possess: in particular, all must have ‘sound doctrine and exemplary moral life’.

Ecclesiae de Mystério is legalistic and prescriptive, or even restrictive in tone, and in this it is very different from the pastoral and encouraging format of many documents from Vatican II. Although the document ends by stating that the ‘clarifications and distinctions do not stem from a concern to defend clerical privileges’, readers could infer a fear of lay usurpation of clerical role and status.¹¹⁸ As with the CDF’s documents *Inter Insigniores* on female ordination, and *On the collaboration of men and women in the Church*, there are signs in the text of a worrying atmosphere of fear and resentment of the laity by some within the clergy.

Concluding thoughts

The twenty-seven years of John Paul II’s pontificate, followed by the seven-year leadership of his close colleague and similarly minded Benedict XVI, affected the way the institutional Church implemented the Council’s teaching on the laity. The ‘genius of women’ is a frequently used phrase whenever John Paul II addressed the question of women within the Church or in society and tends to generate expressions of distaste from men and women alike. Men tend to bristle at the idea that women may have a genius denied to them, and women cringe at yet another fanciful sentiment that places them on some esoteric plane, separate from the rest of humanity. The word genius as used by John Paul seems to refer to woman’s personhood and the capacity for the other, rather than to a high intellect or some feminine flair. John Paul writes of the influence of his upbringing and background on forming his approach to women, which he terms as one of ‘great respect’.¹¹⁹ Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI lost their own mothers at an early age; both had great devotion to the Virgin Mary, both spent most of their lives within almost exclusively male preserves. It seems

¹¹⁸ Congregation for the Clergy et al., *Ecclesiae de Mystério*, Conclusion.

¹¹⁹ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 216.

likely that these factors have a bearing on their emphasis on motherhood and virginity as the main dimensions of every woman's vocation.

Elizabeth Johnston suggests the hierarchy's sense of women as an alien species is rooted in the influence of classical Greek philosophy, with its two differentiated spheres of reality, that is matter and spirit, where men were identified with spirit and women were firmly placed on the lower level of matter.¹²⁰ This contextualisation of the identity of women with their physical corpus has been a problem throughout history, with its connotations of ritual uncleanness, physical frailty, psychological instability, and sexual temptation. All of these factors often function as the sub-texts to any Vatican discussion of the role of women. Sr. Prudence Allen describes the rise of the 'new feminism' attributed to John Paul II's teaching as 'an effort to ransom the deep Catholic meaning of feminism away from its kidnapped state in Marxist feminism, secular humanist feminism, existential feminism, and postmodern feminism'.¹²¹ Her consolidation of many and widely variant feminisms into one threatening ideology, echoes some of the comments in the documents we have considered, particularly from the CDF. We will explore this further in chapter five of this dissertation.

Many faithful Catholics are still unaware of the teaching of Vatican II or the post-conciliar teaching that we have just considered, a situation of which Church leaders are well aware. Pope John Paul II highlighted this when he stressed in *Christifideles Laici*:

the revised code of canon law contains many provisions on the participation of women in the life and mission of the Church. They are provisions that must be more commonly known and according to the diverse sensibilities of culture and opportunities in a pastoral situation, be realized with greater timeliness and determination.¹²²

It would seem that the need is not for the construction of new teaching, but for greater study of the existing teaching of the Church. The reception of any teaching is crucial as without it being accepted, understood, and lived out in

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Johnson, 'Imaging God, Embodying Christ: Women as a sign of the times' in *The Church Women Want*, ed. Elizabeth Johnson (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), 49.

¹²¹ Prudence Allen, 'Mulieris Dignitatem 20 Years later: an overview of the document and challenges', *Ave Maria Law Review*, Vol. 8:1 (2009), 46.

¹²² John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 51.

praxis, it is merely a dead letter. As Richard Gaillardetz asserts, there are two aspects to any authoritative teaching, namely ecclesial reception and individual reception. In the early Church, doctrine was discerned and received communally, that is, the faith community was transformed by it rather than merely accepting it.¹²³ In our modern hierarchical Church structures, the importance of what Pope Francis has called the ‘spiritual instinct’, of all the members of the Church is receiving new attention.¹²⁴ Vatican II re-emphasised the role of this *sensus fidei*, that is, the graced insight present in believers, to allow them to uncover God’s truth.¹²⁵ This individual discernment is vital, as it forms part of the communal dimension of doctrinal reception.

The institutional Church needs to do more than acknowledge, in the words of John Paul II, that ‘women will increasingly play a part in the solution of the serious problems of the future’.¹²⁶ The hierarchy needs also to encourage and support women in taking roles in pastoral ministry. Christ appreciated the strength of women from the outset, so John Paul II quite rightly affirms that Christian discipleship ‘requires that men should truly esteem and love women with total respect for their personal dignity’.¹²⁷ The Pope assures us that ‘perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person, because they see persons with their hearts’.¹²⁸ This sentiment surely indicates that the Church recognises women as ideally placed to minister to others, and to convey the wealth of social teaching that is rooted in respect for the human person.

Summary

In this chapter, we have examined Pope John Paul II’s teaching on women and the important document *Christifideles Laici*. We explored the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s missives *Inter Insignores*, and *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World*, and *Ecclesiae de Mystério*, the instruction regarding the roles of clergy and laity in ministry.

¹²³ Richard Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church*, (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 229.

¹²⁴ Francis, ‘Address to the International Theological Commission’ (Vatican City, 09/12/2013).

¹²⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 12.

¹²⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Women* 4.

¹²⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (22/11/1981), 23, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html.

¹²⁸ John Paul II, *Letter to Women* 12.

Pope John Paul's writings stimulated debate within the Church about the role of women, as although his teaching contains much that is affirming there is also much that relates more to John Paul's ideal of womanhood, than to the lived reality of the female half of humanity.

Christifideles Laici carries forward the teaching of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, but neither proposes a theology of the laity, nor a framework for pastoral implementation of the greater collaboration of all the people of God in the ministry of the Church that Vatican II had hoped for.

Vatican II opened up new horizons, but it would seem these were somewhat constrained by the official teaching in the post conciliar period. The same issues, of equality, dignity, collaboration of laity and clergy, formation, authentic witness and service that we identified in chapter one have been found in the documents considered here. Yet, in some parts of the Church there appears to have been a fearful reaction to the new openness proposed by the Council.

This consideration of magisterial teaching will now be offset by an investigation of the reality experienced in the local Churches in chapter three. To understand how the teaching of Vatican II about the laity and women was understood and applied at the grassroots level we will now consider sociological research findings from countries in the Anglosphere, which focused on the subject of women and their participation in the Church.

CHAPTER 3: NEW WINESKINS -

Review of Post Vatican II research in Anglosphere countries on the participation of women in the Catholic Church

‘For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his faithful ones’. (Ps 37:28)

Introduction

In chapter one, we evidenced the wealth of teaching from the Second Vatican Council that should have opened up new areas of dialogue about collaboration in the Church, involving laity and clergy, women and men.

Chapter two considered the development of this teaching by the institutional Church in the years after the Council. There were clearly efforts to support a greater involvement of laity on one hand, yet this was restricted within specific parameters on the other. John Paul II’s writing on the subject of women was shown as highly influential. In this third chapter, we will investigate the influence that the teaching of Vatican II had on the local Church as regards lay involvement and the role of women. For the purposes of this research, I concentrate on the Anglosphere nations. These are the countries that not only share English as an official language but which also share cultural heritage, that is, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Aotearoa), as well as the four nations of England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland.

The project commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) in 1993 remains the most comprehensive and detailed piece of research undertaken by the Catholic Church on the participation of women so is the main focus of this chapter. The effects of Vatican II had global ramifications, so I will also give an overview of key research undertaken in other Anglosphere nations to place these findings in conversation with the Australian research and identify similar areas of concern and commonalities of experience which we can learn from.

Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus¹

The inspiring and innovative research project on women's participation in the Catholic Church in Australia, commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, was carried out nearly twenty years ago, and is not widely known. Nonetheless, the project's scale and the comprehensiveness of the survey undertaken mean that its findings are still very important. I will here summarise the history and purpose of the project, record its key findings, and report the outcomes, in order both to demonstrate why this research deserves greater recognition, study, and credit for its perennial relevance, but also show the relevance of this survey to the situation of the Catholic Church in Scotland.

History and purpose of the project

This project arose in response to continual approaches to the Australian Bishops' Conference (ACBC) from individuals and groups who saw the role and participation of women in the Church as a social justice issue.² The bishops also viewed this initiative as their response to John Paul II's call for reflection on the role of women in society and in the Church.³ The initial modest proposal was for a survey to ascertain the reality of women's participation in the local Church in response to the influence of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and its call to read and respond to the 'signs of the times' in the light of the gospel.⁴ Vatican II's reconsideration of Religious Life in the light of contemporary challenges, had resulted in many Religious women in Australia moving from work in schools into parish ministry in the 1970's and, by the time of the research project, laywomen were also involved in the work of pastoral ministry. The demographics of the Australian continent, as well as the vast geographic expanse, gave rise to a situation of pastoral necessity, which encouraged the bishops to embrace lay collaboration far more readily than their European confrères.

The Report pays testimony to the influence of the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* on the planning by the Research Management Group (RMG). They responded to

¹ Marie MacDonald, et al. *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*. (Sydney: Harper Collins Religious, 1999).

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid., xii.

⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 4.

John XXIII's identification of the need for mutual collaboration, and acknowledged the active involvement of women in the world as a positive modern phenomenon.⁵ John Paul II's *Letter to Women* and his apology for the historical lack of acknowledgement by both society and the Church of women's gifts and contributions also inspired the project, in that the bishops wanted to respond to his admonition for a 'renewed commitment of fidelity to the gospel vision'.⁶

Other magisterial documents had impact on the Australian Church and the project, such as *Humanae Vitae* and the on-going debate over the teaching on artificial birth control to which it gave rise, and *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, the apostolic letter issued by John Paul II in 1994, which took forward the approach of *Inter Insigniores*, and stated categorically that the Church had no authority to ordain women as priests.⁷ The Australian bishops were clear that in fidelity to the Pope the subject of women's ordination would not be a focus of their research project.

As with all major pieces of research, this project encompassed a substantial period from the initial proposal in 1993, to the publication of the final Report in April 1999. Over these six years, the whole Catholic Church in Australia, comprising of five Provinces with 7 archdioceses and 21 dioceses, was involved in the research consultation as it grew rapidly in response to widespread interest. Indeed, the final Report testifies to the 'overwhelming response' to the consultation. Such a large number participated that the project had impact on a far wider scale than any previous Australian Catholic survey, or indeed any secular poll in the country.⁸ This is clear evidence that the issue of women in the Church was not only topical but also perceived as vitally important.

The Report itself is a comprehensive volume of 496 pages, with an Executive Summary followed by three major sections: the first on the Background and

⁵ John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris* 31-33, 41.

⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Women* 3.

⁷ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* in *Vatican Council II: More Postconciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1982).; John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, (1994) http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_22051994_ordinatio-sacerdotalis_en.html.; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Inter Insigniores*, in *Vatican Council II: More Postconciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1982).

⁸ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 373.

Contextual Papers; the second on the Five Major Research Approaches utilised; the third on an Overview of the Report. There are also extensive Appendices with detailed information on the participants, the survey questions etc.

Research Methodology

The Bishop's Committee for Justice, Development, and Peace (BCJDP) took forward the initiative in 1993. In partnership with the Australian Catholic University (ACU), they set up a Working Party that in the summer of 1995 became the Research Management Group. This group spent considerable time and effort in painstaking planning, trialling, and developing the research tools, before Cardinal Clancy officially launched the project on 21 August 1996 with a mandate to gather data as a 'solid basis for theological reflection, pastoral planning and dialogue with women'.⁹ From the start, it was clear that the bishops would retain responsibility for any recommendations, which they would delineate after their consideration of the findings.

The RMG intended the research to be as inclusive as possible, so they employed a wide spectrum of data gathering methods, qualitative as well as quantitative. A key tool was to utilise the national *Church Life Survey* of 101,000 people in November 1996, by including a specific questionnaire relating to the participation of women for a random sample of Catholic participants. This resulted in 4,457 people submitting information for consideration by the RMG. Two specialist papers were also written to enable the bishops to place this project in context. The first was by Sr. Sophie McGrath rsm on 'Women in the Australian Church: an historical perspective', and the second by Ms Denise Sullivan on 'Women in the Australian Church: an ecumenical perspective'. A third approach was to invite written submissions from any interested group or individual. A fourth method was to hold public hearings in various locations all across the country where people could make presentations of their views and experiences. A fifth mechanism was to survey Catholic organizations such as those involved in education, health care etc. The final mode aimed at ensuring a full breadth of opinion and therefore targeted ten specific groups of men and women. These were: clergy, laymen, young women, women with disabilities,

⁹ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 5.

disadvantaged women, single mothers, refugee women, non-English speaking women and two groups particular to this continent, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and Ukrainian Catholic women.

All participants would be responding to four specific issues:

1. The areas of engagement women currently had with the local Church;
2. The support towards participation they were receiving;
3. The barriers to participation they were encountering;
4. The ways in which women's participation in the local Church could be developed.

The final report also contained several important Appendices. Appendices 12, 13, and 14 were made up of reports on current models of participation from the English National Board of Catholic Women, the Archdiocese of Brisbane, and the Archdiocese of Adelaide respectively. Appendix number 20, the 'Account of Social Trends in the Nineties in Australia', highlighted the change in attitudes and behaviour in society in general, as well as identifying issues which directly concerned women such as marriage, family life, fertility, paid employment, voluntary work and education. All of these contribute to a comprehensive consultation whose results are representative of a wide spectrum of opinions, from a diverse range of individuals and organizations.

Findings

Participants warmly welcomed the research project, seeing it as a definite sign of goodwill from the bishops and of hope for the future. There was nevertheless, a residue of concern about how and when the findings would result in positive developments and implementations.¹⁰

The first important consequence of the consultation was evidence of the substantive and widespread involvement of women in all kinds of service within the Church. Indeed, clergy and laity attested that women comprised the majority of active parishioners, and that their contribution underpinned parish life and mission. However, these were rarely official positions or roles involving leadership or decision-making. In the main, they were ancillary posts, and there

¹⁰ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 374.

was a perception of a stained glass ceiling in an institution with an exclusively male hierarchy.

The Report raised awareness of the fact that each woman in Australia is a unique individual. Every woman had views, opinions, skills, spiritual insights and lifestyles, which were part of God's gift of personhood to them, and which had been honed by their particular experiences of human life. That the project could solicit opinions from such a diverse range of women is testimony to the careful planning of the RMG, and their resolve to be as inclusive as possible.

This research project also uncovered two definite and opposing stances among women. A minority of women held views clearly influenced by a focus on tradition, obedience, the catechism, maintenance of the status quo, adherence to doctrine and rules set by the hierarchy. These women were extremely wary of anything that could hint at a feminist agenda, seeing this in a purely negative light. This was in direct contrast to those women who focused on the scriptures and Jesus' modelling of human living and early Church praxis. These women wanted a unity which accepted diversity, were open to change that was in response to current needs and realities, and favoured a moderate feminism and the use of inclusive language in liturgy. Despite their differences, all of these women were people of strong faith, who loved the Church they were part of, felt passionate about the need to campaign against injustice, and recognised the value of women's contribution to the faith community as well as to society.¹¹ In recognition of this, and aware that any labels could be both misleading and unhelpful, the RMG was careful to avoid any categorisation of conservative or liberal or similar tags, but rather stressed that views were often mixed.

Contextual papers

The two contextual papers were important in setting the scene for the survey of women's participation in the Australian Church, explaining as they did both the historical background and contemporary realities. Sophie McGrath's paper, 'Women in the Australian Church: an historical perspective', traced the history

¹¹ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 373.

of Catholic women in Australia from World War II to the 1990's.¹² As a historian, she stressed from the outset that both mainstream history and Church history, since they have mainly male authors, focus mainly on the activities of men. However, research has shown the constant presence and contribution of women to society and Church through the ages. In Australia, some rich women of status became patrons of and exerted influence on the Church. However, Religious were the first women to make their presence felt, particularly in the field of education. Even bishops considered female education important, although mainly because of their future maternal roles as the primary educators of families.¹³ Pope Pius XI's encyclical on Catholic Action in Italy, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* promulgated in 1931, led the Australian bishops to support the involvement of the lay faithful in the Church's mission, although always under their direction and control.

McGrath records that the first wave of feminism which swept the globe in the late 19th century had its Australian protagonists in the Catholic feminist sisters Annie and Belle Golding, who were members of The Womanhood Suffrage League of 1891, and founders of the Women's Progressive Association in 1900. The second wave, in the 1960's, was even more dramatic, and raised women's awareness of the injustice and inequality in secular society, and within faith communities too. Indeed, even the hierarchy was affected as John XXIII acknowledged in 1963 that 'since women are becoming more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person.'¹⁴

McGrath then goes on to summarise the history of the various groupings of Catholic women in Australia, such as the Catholic Women's Association (CWA) founded in 1913 in Sydney. In order to assist with the war effort in 1941, the CWA became part of a new body: the Legion of Catholic Women. As early as 1928, networking at national level had already begun among the various Catholic women's organisations spread across the regions of Australia. This federation of organisations became the Australian Council of Catholic Women in 1961,

¹² Sophie McGrath, 'Women in the Australian Church: An Historical Perspective' in *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, Marie MacDonald, et al. (Sydney: Harper Collins Religious, 1999), 19-41.

¹³ McGrath, 'Women in the Australian Church', 22.

¹⁴ John XXIII, *Pacem et Terris* 41.

renamed the Catholic Women's League Australia in 1975. These organisations then nominated women to represent the Church on various government bodies.

Despite women's growing awareness and criticism of prevailing Church structures, the majority of active Catholic women were still only involved in the housework that kept parishes and priests functioning. A reflection of this is the anecdote Sophie McGrath relates, that when Pope Paul VI visited Australia in 1970 the Catholic Women's League 'contributed a set of new curtains to the Apostolic Delegation, where a reception for the Pope was held and to which no member of the CWL was invited'.¹⁵ However, McGrath also makes clear that despite barriers constructed by a Church with a fortress mentality, the Church does not exist in a vacuum. Nothing could prevent the influences of the changes in secular society, and Catholic women began to make their presence felt. Female Religious worldwide were at the forefront of embracing the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, so their close association with laywomen in Australia had a catalytic effect, inspiring these laywomen to embrace theological study and opportunities for parish service when these became available.

By the 1980's the decrease in female Religious had opened the doors for laywomen to become the prime movers in education in schools. Despite this, positions of leadership were still predominantly held by laymen. Laywomen mainly delivered catechesis across the country. Gradually, as more opportunities for theological study opened up to women, posts in tertiary and adult education opened up for laywomen too. Religious women had already moved into parish ministry positions due to the shortage of priests. By the 1990's, laywomen had joined them, some even appointed by bishops as 'pastoral administrators of parishes'.¹⁶

The second contextual paper, 'Women in the Australian Church: an ecumenical perspective', was by a laywoman, Denise Sullivan, at that time the Executive Secretary to the Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-faith relations.¹⁷

¹⁵ McGrath, 'Women in the Australian Church', 37.

¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷ Denise Sullivan, 'Women in the Australian Church: An Ecumenical Perspective' in *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, Marie MacDonald, et al. (Sydney: Harper Collins Religious 1999), 43-52.

Her paper traces the history of the modern ecumenical movement from its beginning in Edinburgh in 1910, through the setting up of the World Council of Churches in 1948, to the present day. Throughout this process, women had been conspicuously present and indeed, it was thanks to the interventions of Twila Cavert, whose husband was one of the formation committee, that WCC initiated a global survey of women in the Church in 1948. Twila Cavert also ensured that the subject of women in the Church was on the agenda for the first Assembly of the WCC; it has been a permanent agenda item ever since, with the period 1988-1998 designated as a decade of solidarity with women.¹⁸ Many Catholic women were involved in ecumenical activities in Australia, and through their contacts and experience had begun to question the attitudes and practices within their own denomination towards women, which were often in 'stark contrast' to those in other Christian Churches.¹⁹

First qualitative research method: the Mass Survey

Within the responses from the different research methods, there were interesting similarities, although also clearly identifiable contrasts of opinion. Those who completed the Church Life questionnaire were those who attended Mass on the Sunday of the form distribution. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that like those in any church, on any Sunday, anywhere, they have an older age profile, are in the majority female, and feel content in the parish. More than 50 per cent of those surveyed were involved with the local Church only by attending Sunday Mass.

It is worth highlighting that the various groupings were not mutually exclusive; many of the people who responded by other methods were also people who attended Mass and were active in their parishes. However, it is interesting that in this Mass poll three-quarters of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of any barriers to women's participation. In contrast, of those who used other methods to participate in the research, the same percentage considered that barriers to women's participation existed. This discrepancy might be due to so few of the Mass poll group reporting active engagement with the local Church; therefore they lacked awareness of the realities of parish

¹⁸ Sullivan, 'Women in the Australian Church' 45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

ministry and activities. Poignantly, if unsurprisingly, 74 per cent of this group said their mother was one of the three most significant people who had affected their faith development, a key indication of implicit female influence in their lives.

Written Submissions

There was a tremendous response to the invitation for written submissions, with 2,555 submissions received by the research project. Of these, 1,776 were from individuals, 719 from groups, and 60 were anonymous, and so were disregarded.

Although all the submissions were intended to address one or more of the four research questions, there was a wide diversity in the content, as there was in the backgrounds and personal profiles of the writers. A substantial number were written by women who felt hurt by, or disengaged from, the Church. However, they obviously still felt enough concern for the Church to want to be involved with the project, and found this method a sympathetic medium. Indeed, it was equally obvious that these women still held on to hope that change was possible. An overwhelming majority of the responses advocated the need for greater opportunities for women at all levels, including decision-making. Only a small minority felt the institutional Church offered adequate support and assistance to women, and of these many indicated that the support came from female Religious orders, rather than from the hierarchy. All acknowledged improvements to women's status and involvement since Vatican II and gave the Council credit for providing teaching which could challenge the status quo and support new initiatives.

The majority of submissions identified the main barrier to women's participation as the patriarchal and hierarchal structures that were often oppressive and alienating. The report records that respondents sometimes used the description 'sin of sexism', to indicate the gravity of the fact that women were often excluded, or treated as second-class citizens.²⁰ These submissions were not advocating a sharing of power by women. Rather, they desired equal opportunities for women and men to contribute to the building up of their faith communities. A clear majority called for gender balance and the utilisation of

²⁰ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 125.

all the talents inherent in the laity, particularly those who had educated themselves theologically to be of service to the local Church.

Public Hearings

Twenty-four bishops and all eight members of the RMG participated in the panels, which heard the submissions of five hundred individuals and groups who chose to present to the Public Hearings, and who actually represented the views and suggestions of several thousand people.²¹ These Hearings occurred in 1997 over thirty-two days and in twenty-three venues. This marked expansion from the original plan of hosting events in only eight cities and four rural areas resulted from the huge response. The report highlights that participants in these Hearings, in contrast to the Mass attendees, exhibited a 'dichotomous relationship' with the institutional Church', being passionately committed but also frustrated by it.²² Yet all were grateful for this unique opportunity to speak directly to the hierarchy. There was a 'dominant feeling of pain and alienation', yet also a willingness to contribute to any future developments that could improve matters.²³

There were frequent references to barriers to women's participation caused by clericalism and hierarchical impositions. However, there was also a clear understanding and acceptance of the Vatican II teaching on the Church as the 'People of God' and the 'Body of Christ', and of the responsibility of all the baptised for the Church's maintenance and mission.²⁴ Participants stressed their total rejection of gender inequality: a discipleship of equals was the dominant model presented, recognising that both women and men had much to contribute.²⁵ For most participants, women's issues were integral with the need to review the theology of the laity, and to develop the collaborative model of ministry for clergy and laity seen as crucial for the vitality of the Church.²⁶

Most participants also identified the fundamental barrier to women's participation as the patriarchal attitudes and clerical structures, which they saw

²¹ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 173-232.

²² *Ibid.*, 174.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 10.

²⁵ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 376.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

as inconsistent with Jesus' life and teaching.²⁷ Their responses were a clarion call for reform of a lack of equality 'inherent in the very structures of the Church'.²⁸ However, the 'nature of ministry' was seen as a more important issue to be addressed than that of women's ordination to the priesthood, and to the diaconate.²⁹ The main issue for participants was inclusion and participation in the life of the local Church.³⁰ This included a rethinking of ministry in general. Lay chaplaincy, particularly in hospitals and prisons, was a prime concern, as indeed it was in the written submissions. For example, the Catholic Hospital Chaplains Associates from Adelaide experienced their ministry as compromised, due to their inability to affirm sacramentally the reconciliation that they witnessed, or to share the gift of God's strengthening in sickness through anointing.³¹ In response to such experiences, respondents made repeated appeals for lay chaplains to be able to confer these sacraments when necessary. A wide concern was the lack of opportunities for theologically educated women to use their skills and talents within the institutional Church. Participants perceived these women as an 'untapped gift', whose neglect impoverished the Church.³²

The respondents indicated no concern that focusing on the participation of women would lead to a gender bias. On the contrary, they were of the opinion that anything that improved opportunities for laywomen benefited laymen too, and the Church as a whole. This clearly echoed the views of John Paul II, who in 1996 had written: 'it is equally important to point out that women's new self-awareness also helps men to reconsider their way of looking at things, the way they understand themselves, where they place themselves in history and how they interpret it'.³³

Catholic Organizations

For this part of the research, RMG sent invitations to all the Catholic organizations and educational establishments including both Catholic universities, the Australian Catholic University and the University of Notre Dame,

²⁷ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 193.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

³² *Ibid.*, 231.

³³ John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996), 57.

Australia. Seventy-nine groups in total submitted responses for consideration: 42 health care organizations; 12 Catholic education establishments; 11 Catholic welfare organizations; 5 diocesan/national organizations and 9 other groups/movements. The RMG stressed that due to the small scale of the sampling, no generalisations could be made about either the sector (that is, health, education etc.) or Catholic organisations as a whole.³⁴

However, clear patterns did emerge, for example the statistics record that in 38 out of 42 health organizations surveyed, women held 50 per cent of positions in leadership and management positions, and in 38 health organizations, 65 per cent of supervisory roles were held by women. In Catholic primary schools, 80.8 per cent of teachers were female while in secondary schools only 55.5 per cent were female. The majority of Head teachers in primary schools were women, but female Head teachers were in a minority in Secondary schools, and many of these were still at that time Religious women. One participant commented that positions in Catholic institutions 'are gendered - women religious can cross these barriers but not laywomen', another said 'assertive women are always seen as aggressive'.³⁵

The groups identified common barriers to women's participation. There was a cultural view of men as leaders, and a struggle for women balancing family and work commitments to progress up the career ladder. Organisational structures were male/clerical/hierarchical, which informed the style of policies and procedures. There was a serious lack of mentoring for women by women. However, the future was looking brighter with increased numbers of women in theological education: 74 per cent of Bachelor of Education undergraduates and 52 per cent of Bachelor of Theology undergraduates were female. Three-fifths of post-graduate theology students were women, the majority of whom were schoolteachers. However at doctoral level, men comprised the majority of candidates, which is a typical observation in education.

Targeted Groups

Ten specific groups were also targeted after the Public Hearings, as the other methods of data gathering had shown that these groups were under-represented

³⁴ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 340.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 349.

among the respondents. These were Indigenous women; refugee women; Ukrainian Catholic Church women; non-English speaking women; lone parents; disabled women and carers; socially disadvantaged women; young women; clergy and laymen. To elicit the fullest response the method chosen was a series of targeted small group discussions.

Not surprisingly, the Indigenous, refugee, Ukrainian and non-English speaking women testified to cultural and language barriers to their participation in the Church. They were keen to see liturgical diversity which they thought would be more inclusive and stressed the need for a warmer welcome in parishes. Many had experienced discrimination in the local Church and were keen to see role models from within their own groups in ministry. This response was echoed by women who were single mothers and by disabled women.

Socially and economically disadvantaged women - a group that perhaps had the greatest need of the support of the faith community - were the least likely to turn to the Church for assistance. These women understood marginalisation and clearly saw this in the way the hierarchy treated most women. They did not feel good enough for the Church, and found the institution's lack of compassion at odds with the scriptural accounts of Jesus' words and works.³⁶ Magisterial teaching on marriage and divorce caused additional discrimination. A single mother testified: 'we have heard from the pulpit how children from divorced/single parent families are "damaged". This of course only reinforces any guilt that a mother might feel because she has had to leave a difficult marriage'.³⁷

Among the young women's groups there was a consensus: 'in an age where lives are so flexible in every aspect, the Church comes over as rigid and unbending with no place for dialogue'.³⁸ These groups called for education of the clergy about women and training in collaborative ministry. Young female theology students were particularly keen to be able to put their studies to good use, but perceived the existence of barriers to this:

³⁶ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 286.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 299.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 313.

as young women with feminist ideals we are being taught that we can aim for everything and anything, but as Catholic women we face a conflict between this and what the Church's position is on many issues...the Church positions 'feminism' as radical and many women within the Church are 'conservative' feminists.³⁹

And yet, within these targeted groups of young women, one group expressed completely different views from the other groups, being more concerned about orthodoxy than with participation.⁴⁰

The clergy surveyed were unanimous in their awareness that women made up the majority of their congregations and contributed most to the smooth running of parishes. Clergy reported that women were: 'found to be more reliable on committees in terms of performance, attendance and general enthusiasm'.⁴¹ However, they also identified obstacles: 'covert or open discrimination against women', 'closed -mindedness and fear on the part of many men with power in the Church', and a sense among clergy of a 'we need the women to do what the men can't mentality'.⁴² No specifics were given as to what it is that men cannot do, but as the clerical participants agreed that women's gifts were not fully utilised in the Church, one might surmise that cleaning, flower arranging etc. were the areas they had in mind.

Some priests also admitted to 'a sense of powerlessness' when faced with issues regarding women. Some felt a 'fear of women'. All the clerical groups saw the use of exclusive language as a 'significant' barrier. Some mentioned the barriers caused by what they saw as 'extreme ideological feminism' or 'the lack of charity among some women'. Some said it was not only women's role in the Church that needed to be re-defined, but also the role of men too. Priests identified the need for dialogue, and requested opportunities for women to speak and for the clergy to listen without being patronising. They also called for consistent and open leadership from the bishops. Continuing renewal of the clergy, lifelong personal and professional development, were seen as necessary to effect real change in attitudes and praxis.⁴³

³⁹ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 312.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 310.

⁴¹ Ibid., 253.

⁴² Ibid., 255.

⁴³ Ibid., 254-259.

The laymen surveyed held similar views to the other groups, although they made little or no reference to motherhood and family life when considering participation by women in the Church.⁴⁴ According to the laymen, women ‘dominate’ parish life at grass roots level. The young laymen’s groups emphasised most strongly the need for female participation to increase to equality of participation at every level, including leadership positions. All the groups agreed that gender should not be a barrier to participation, but only the young men mentioned the need for the Church to change structures and practices to reflect the modern world. Of the males surveyed, only the younger men called for an increase in women’s participation. Older men seemed to think that women already had equal opportunities for participation, and were unique in thinking that women were already well supported by the institutional Church. The young men thought that lack of support was a real barrier to women.⁴⁵

Some laymen felt that priests were fearful of educated women, particularly those educated in theology, seeing them as a threat to their status in the parish.⁴⁶ Laymen also identified the need for good female role models stressing these should be lay rather than Religious women.⁴⁷

Response to the Report by the Australian Catholic Church

The conducting of such a huge consultation on this issue of the participation of women in the life of the Church was a brave undertaking of the Australian bishops. After a period of deliberation over the findings, the Bishops Conference ratified a series of decisions in 2000 in order to create an ‘effective management of change’, so that an inclusive vision and the building of a discipleship of equals would become a reality.⁴⁸

The nine national decisions were:

1. To achieve a better balance of women/men - clergy/Religious/laity in all advisory/leadership/professional roles;

⁴⁴ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 269.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 275.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 272.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 277.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 395.

2. To develop policies that would promote the equality and dignity of women;
3. To foster research in ministry - particularly the roles for laity and women;
4. To provide resources for lay hospital/prison chaplains;
5. To provide pastoral/spiritual support for those with marriage difficulties;
6. To provide training and supervision for laywomen and men involved in ministry
7. To enter into a dialogue with Australian Indigenous peoples about issues arising from the consultation;
8. To establish a Commission for Catholic Women;
9. To establish an office to support the work of the Commission.

Swiftly implementing the last of these recommendations, the bishops established a national Commission for Australian Catholic Women (CACW) in December 2000. Reporting directly to ACBC, and with the mandate to assist in the implementation of the other proposals, CACW was to continue providing opportunities for dialogue with women. The Autumn 2000 edition of the Australian journal *Compass: a Review of Topical Theology*, focused on the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report, in order to disseminate information and to encourage open-ended reflection.

The ACBC also wanted to honour their renewed commitment to research. In the post-conciliar years they had already responded to Vatican II's call to study the teaching of council and continue the process of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* by establishing the National Catholic Research Council. This Council had undertaken a research project on Religious Life; in 1980 it established an Institute of Religious Studies. From it, as a direct product of the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report, ACU established the Golding Centre for Women's History, Theology, and Spirituality in April 2003. The Golding Centre's main objective was to respond to the needs expressed by women in the consultation, that is: to support women in theological study, to record women's place in history and to develop their spirituality.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The Golding Centre, http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/about_us/research_centres_-and-_institutes/golding_centre/.

In May 2006, the ACBC undertook a review of the structures of their conference. One result was that the Commission for Catholic Women became a Council for Australian Catholic Women (CACW). This Council was now advisory to the Bishops' Commission for Church Ministry, rather than reporting directly to the bishops, and had a changed mandate. At the same time, an Office for the Participation of Women was established, which indicates that the original proposals had not been forgotten.

By 2008, the perception held by many people in Australia, as reported by Geraldine Doogue in an ABC television documentary, was that 'thorny issues faced the Roman Catholic Church in Australia: the crisis in the priesthood, and the role of women in the Church'.⁵⁰ Many felt that nothing had changed in the Church in Australia despite the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report. This is not entirely accurate, as there had been some responses in line with the Bishop's promises in 2000. However, not all the Nine Decisions had been implemented, and in particular many of the recommendations for diocesan consideration seemed to have been consigned to the archives.

Ten years after the publication of the Report, Sr. Sonia Wagner, one of the Research Management Group who had been involved with the project for eight years, wrote a Retrospective paper presented at the Conference 'Women: Gathering, Affirming, Celebrating', held in Canberra in August 2009. Her reflections add to our understanding of the project and its impact. Although she had been involved in other work over the intervening years, Wagner was still convinced that the consultation was 'ground breaking'.⁵¹ She affirmed the integrity of the process and the genuine concern of the bishops of that time to learn about the issues affecting women. The project had met with an unexpected and overwhelming response amid much goodwill, but Wagner recognised that in some quarters there had also been undercurrents of fear that the project would highlight an existing polarization within the Church community. Some people were concerned that there would be consequences for

⁵⁰ Geraldine Doogue, 'Compass: Catholic Dilemma Part 2 - Women: The Silenced Majority', *Compass*, ABC Television, July 27, 2008, <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s2316508.htm>.

⁵¹ Sonia Wagner, 'Woman and Man: A Retrospective' (2009), http://www.opw.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com_docman&task=...

anyone speaking out frankly and critically, while others worried that the project would widen existing divisions.⁵² In the end, neither of these fears was realised.

For Wagner, the bishops' recommendations were true to the findings of the project, and she gave credit to the work on initiatives to implement these proposals in practice. She was also clear that the bishops still needed to address many areas, and that this was a work in progress. Wagner recognised that the contradiction between signs of hope and signs of concern was still a feature of both society and Church life. Yet, she was adamant that this did not mean failure but rather was part of the challenge of human living, the dichotomy within, as well as between, human beings identified in the teaching of Vatican II.⁵³

The irrefutable fruit of the Report, Wagner emphasised, was that the issue of women's role within the local Church was now permanently on the episcopal agenda. The research had also shown that dialogue was possible between clergy and laity and that the development of collaboration between them was essential for the present and future wellbeing of the Church. Wagner stressed that any future development from the Report depended not just on the support of the bishops, but also on the dynamic, creative, and enthusiastic interventions of the laity. To stress that commitment she ended her talk with the inspiring phrase from the prophet Habakkuk: 'The vision still has its time, presses on to fulfilment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come'.⁵⁴

In 2015, the Australian bishops' Office for the Participation of Women (OPW) remains a focus for 'ongoing dialogue and integration of ideas' regarding women and their participation in the Church.⁵⁵ They have re-launched the Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship for young women. This group provides personal, spiritual, and theological formation, as well as opportunity for inter-faith dialogue, all of which were mentioned in the research project as of value. However, in the intervening years, many of the issues raised by participants in

⁵² Wagner, 'Woman and Man: A Retrospective'.

⁵³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 10.

⁵⁴ Habakkuk 2:3.

⁵⁵ Office for the Participation of Women, <http://www.opw.catholic.org.au/>.

the project have not progressed significantly. Many of the barriers to women's participation in the Church still exist in Australia, as well as closer to home.

The *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report highlighted the amazing diversity in the women surveyed. This is a vital point, as so often the study of women focuses on them as a homogeneous group, uniform in outlook and perception, when in reality there is a huge spectrum of emotions and opinions about life, and great diversity of understanding of models and visions of faith and Church.

Nonetheless, the dominant issue that arose from the Australian consultation is, the question of gender equality.⁵⁶ A faith community that continually stresses the divine revelation of the intrinsic equal dignity of every man and woman created in the divine image, must also recognize that this equality does not mean sameness or uniformity but rather complementarity and mutuality. This is a crucial point, which fifteen years later is still not evident in praxis.

The Australian research also made clear that contemporary women do not 'have it all' with regard to careers and families. Instead, they have colossal pressures put upon them by the cultural perceptions that they should be able to juggle both lifestyles. In particular, the lack of welcome and respect felt by some groups of women in their local Churches too often reflects a judgmental stance and lack of compassion, from both clergy and laity, which needs to be addressed by the whole faith community. To ensure participation is possible for anyone, it needs to be available to everyone. Despite these caveats, I share the dynamic hope expressed by Sonia Wagner that change will come if women continue to work for it. This will involve women learning from the past, and reflecting on these experiences, with men, in the light of our contemporary world, hence the importance of evolving research. This correlates with an important finding from the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report; the necessary role of effective dialogue as a means to any positive development. This has perennial relevance, especially in the light of the need for a new evangelisation and Paul VI's teaching on the mentality needed to foster dialogue is apt:

⁵⁶ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 394.

Our dialogue, therefore, presupposes that there exists in us a state of mind, which we wish to communicate and to foster in those around us. It is the state of mind, which characterizes the person who realizes the seriousness of the apostolic mission and who sees their own salvation as inseparable from the salvation of others.⁵⁷

Around the world bishops were inspired by the Council to seek ways to initiate dialogue within their local churches. The Australian bishops although visionary, were not trailblazers in their deliberations over the position and the participation of women in the Catholic Church. The effects of Vatican II meant that many of the same issues were being discussed elsewhere, to varied success as we shall see.

The participation of women in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

Decades before Vatican II, the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) had been founded in 1939 by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW) as a forum at diocesan and national level intended to allow women to 'share their views'.⁵⁸ This was a pioneering initiative: NBCW was one of the first women's groups to be developed by a conference of Catholic bishops.

In 1953, CBCEW established a National Lay Apostolic Group at the instigation of the then Monsignor Derek Worlock. This later developed into the National Council for Lay Associations (NCLA and continued until 2006. As Archbishop of Liverpool, Worlock would continue his efforts to promote the vocation of the laity, with the support of Cardinal Basil Hume. Their efforts culminated in the National Pastoral Congress, held from 2nd -6th May 1980 in Liverpool with 2000 delegates, focused on the theme 'Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life'. Preparations for the conference had been extensive, with discussion groups set up in dioceses and deaneries to feedback on the key priorities identified for the Church at that time. Seven themes were chosen: the People of God - co-responsibility and relationships; the People of God - ministry, vocation, apostolate; Family and Society; Evangelisation; Christian Education and Formation; Christian Witness; and Justice.

⁵⁷ Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1964), 80, 82.

⁵⁸ National Board of Catholic Women, <http://www.nbcw.co.uk/about.html>.

Pope John Paul II sent a message of support and blessing to the conference delegates, which made clear that any work towards empowering the laity was fully in line with the aims of the Council: 'As members of the pilgrim Church you come together to share information and to take stock of what has so far been done, in fidelity to the gospel, to implement the decrees of the Second Vatican Council'.⁵⁹ Many who attended the Congress found it inspiring, including Gerry J. Hughes, who nearly a quarter of a century later still appreciated 'the enthusiasm it generated, and the promise it held for the future'.⁶⁰ The *Easter People* report from the conference, published on 19th August 1980 and presented to John Paul II, was a significant piece of work, yet it subsequently faded into obscurity.⁶¹ It brought together points made in the debate on the seven themes, but also proposed further deliberations on topics such as marriage, sexuality and contraception: these may at that time have been seen as a step too far.⁶²

Paragraph 178 of *Easter People* thanked women for all they contributed to the Church and stated: 'the time is overdue for more positive attitudes about your participation in the life of the Church'. NBCW sought practical ways to implement this vision. In 1989, as part of its celebration of its golden jubilee, it instituted a review of its purpose and work and commissioned two consultations of women, one in Middlesbrough diocese and the other in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. The eagerness of women to contribute their opinions at these meetings led NBCW to undertake a national consultation of women based on the teaching of *Christifideles Laici*. Its consultation paper 'Women: Status and Role, Life and Mission' was responded to by 2,884 individual women and 78 groups. Although NBCW made no detailed analysis of the responses, they compiled the report *Do not be afraid*, which was presented to the bishops at their Low Week meeting in April 1991.

Do not be afraid records evidence of the ways that women were currently contributing to the building up of the Church, from activities of service, such as

⁵⁹ John Paul II, 'Message to the National Pastoral Conference' (Liverpool: May 02, 1980), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/pont_messages/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19800502_pastorale-liverpool_en.html.

⁶⁰ Gerry J. Hughes, 'Where do we go from here?' Address to 2nd A Call To Action (ACTA) Conference (Newman University Birmingham: October 26, 2013).

⁶¹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, *The Easter People: A message from the Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in the light of the National Pastoral Conference Liverpool 1980* (London: St Paul Publications, 1980).

⁶² CBCEW, *The Easter People* 102-105.

church cleaning and flower arranging, to catechesis, liturgical ministries and spiritual guidance. It observed that women were noticeably less prominent in decision-making roles such as that of school governor or lay-chair of parish pastoral councils.⁶³

There was a division of opinion on whether women's contributions were valued or not and if there was room for improvement. Some women felt they were not allowed to use their talents, and many agreed that any involvement depended on the attitude of the parish priest towards women.⁶⁴ In response to the question of whether women themselves should be expected to take the lead in increasing participation many voiced fears of being considered 'strident' or labelled 'feminist', a term thought to be pejorative.⁶⁵

The results of this English survey clearly show many similarities to the responses to the Australian research, particularly in that there was a wide variety of opinion among Catholic women and the sense that - despite their current high level of involvement - women's skills were being underused. The use of exclusive language was seen as 'an unnecessary barrier in all Church communication.'⁶⁶ Perhaps most significantly, the need for ongoing formation of clergy and laity to enable fruitful collaborative ministry were seen as paramount, as was the need for the Church to match its practice to its teaching for authentic witness.⁶⁷

The bishops welcomed the commitment of the women who had taken part in the consultation and agreed to the setting up of a working party between NBCW and CBCEW to respond to the report. They also endorsed a second consultation involving questionnaires at diocesan level in order to determine the areas of Church life where women were currently involved, and identify areas for improvement. The report from these findings, entitled *Working Together* was published in 1995. The report records a relatively low response, in that only 3000 completed questionnaires, and that these came from a narrow range of

⁶³ The National Board of Catholic Women, *Do not be Afraid* (Guildford: Redemptorist Publications, 1991), 9-10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

women (i.e. most responses were from white, middle class, educated women). The findings highlight eight themes, most of which echoed those identified in *Do not be Afraid*: the need for better communication, for more effective utilising of the skills of women, for inclusive language, for ongoing formation of clergy and laity, for authentic witness to the gospel, and for involving women in decision making. However, *Working Together* also called for action to counter the 'power' of parish priests to restrict the involvement of women and for some redefinition of the role of the ordained priesthood.⁶⁸ One practical response to this research was the formation of a network of those women appointed as diocesan representatives to NBCW.

In 1995, CBCEW undertook a study on the role of the laity and published a further report: *The Sign We Give*. This focused on strategies for establishing collaborative ministry between clergy and laity, the latter including both men and women. The working party wanted this report to explore the communion ecclesiology that would underpin best practice. It identified some tensions that could arise in collaboration, one of which related to the notion of female-male complementarity:⁶⁹

When men and women collaborate in ministry, they cannot avoid entering the complex territory of understanding the complementarity of masculine and feminine within and between persons. Indeed, the Trinitarian basis of collaboration demands openness to this aspect of relationships. It may be highly charged and can seem risky to some, but it is one of the ways in which collaborative ministry offers a possibility of profound personal and spiritual growth.⁷⁰

This statement - highly significant for this thesis - pinpoints the difficulty, but also the necessity, of building relationships of understanding and respect between women and men in the Church. Only in this way can the Church, fulfil the call to emulate the perfection of relationship in the trinitarian life of God.

At this time, the Queen's Ecumenical Foundation for Theological Education in Birmingham was also conducting its Authority and Governance research project in England (1996-2002). An interdisciplinary group of experts conducted a wide

⁶⁸ The National Board of Catholic Women, 'Working Together' in *Briefing*, February 16, 1995, (Westminster: CBCEW), 22-27.

⁶⁹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, *The Sign We Give* (Chelmsford: CBCEW, 1995), 11.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

scale survey of the reality of governance and authority current in the Catholic Church. Their research encompassed 1000 participants, both clerical and lay, and six dioceses, two of which were in Scotland. The investigations focussed on three areas: firstly, the model of Church as it operated at local level in comparison to the official diocesan model; secondly, the engagement of the parishes with diocesan structures and personnel; and, thirdly, parish leadership, including lay participation and formation. Some of the findings are of significance to an investigation of the participation of women in the Catholic Church: they concern the non-accountability of priests, the uneven implementation of collaborative ministry, and the very varied levels of involvement of the laity across the dioceses surveyed.⁷¹ The Authority and Governance project is the subject of several current doctoral research studies so it will be interesting to discover what hindered its reception. It is noticeable that in the survey, which was conducted in 2013 as part of this present research, and is discussed in chapter 4, none of the participants mention the Authority and Governance project, although some did mention either the Pastoral Conference, or NBCW, or both. The issues of Church authority and lay formation are still seen as crucial elements in need of rehabilitation.

In 1999, CBCEW issued *The Priority of Adult Formation*, a paper produced by the Committee for Catechetics and Adult Christian Education. This credits Vatican II as a watershed for the Church's understanding about the need for ongoing faith formation of the laity. From its opening lines it stresses the 'particular need to form adults for lay leadership and additional responsible participation in the Church of the future'.⁷² The document traces the development of the understanding of the Church on this subject, from Vatican II through the General Catechetical Directory, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Catechesi Tradendae*, to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the General Directory for Catechesis. All of these documents focus on the common call of all the baptised to educate themselves about their faith so that they can fully participate in the mission of the Church. In his Foreword to *The Priority of Adult Formation*, Bishop John Rawsthorne, of Hallam diocese,

⁷¹ Cf. Noel Timms, (Editor), *Diocesan Dispositions and Parish Voices in the Roman Catholic Church* (Chelmsford: Matthew James Publishing Ltd, 2001), 174; 114; 190 where there is specific mention of the need to consult the laity.

⁷² Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, *The Priority of Adult Formation* (Chelmsford: CBCEW, 1999) Introduction, 1.

highlights that although ‘the Church has been talking about lifelong learning for a long time’, the Church worldwide has now placed a new emphasis on adult faith formation, as well as improved catechesis for children.⁷³ In response to this report, educational initiatives were set up in various English dioceses where lay Catholics, women and men, could study theology and catechesis at various levels.

In April 2006, NCLA’s annual report reflected on the teaching in *Gaudium et Spes*, and considered the on-going challenges of responding to the signs of the times forty years after the Council. NCLA recognised the Church’s contribution to many areas of faith in action: from work with the poor and marginalised, to promoting the sanctity of life, to ecumenical and interfaith collaboration on justice issues. However, primary among the many areas that NCLA categorised as in need of improvement, was the fact that the Church was still not utilising the many talents of the laity.⁷⁴

This brief investigation clearly shows awareness in the CBCEW of the need to form laity and to involve them in the life and mission of the Church, and also of the need to consult women to discover how to ensure their equal participation with men. Today NBCW still exists, with appointed representatives from every diocese, but it no longer has the original direct dialogue or influence with the bishops. This is a cause of considerable concern for members of the Commission. In June 2014, as NBCW celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary, Cardinal Vincent Nichols thanked its members and commented that the contribution of women in the Church is essential, since they take ‘the lead in studying and acting upon crucial issues in our society’.⁷⁵ Hopefully, such fine rhetoric will result in a return to fruitful engagement between the hierarchy and NBCW in England and Wales.

⁷³ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales, *The Priority of Adult Formation*, 1.

⁷⁴ The National Council for Lay Associations, ‘54th Annual Report’ (England & Wales: April 2005-April 2006), 6.

⁷⁵ Vincent Nicols, ‘Message to NBCW’ (June 24, 2014). <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/archbishop-of-westminster-affirms-contribution-of-women-in-church-s-mission>.

The participation of women in the Catholic Church in Canada

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) also addressed the subject of the participation of women in the Church in their deliberations after Vatican II. Canadian bishops had consulted the laity both before the Council and between the Council sessions and the responses they received, which considered amongst other subjects that of the role of women in the Church, were highly influential on the Canadian bishops attending the Council. As Archbishop Philip Pocock attests: 'we knew that upon our return to Rome our main deliberations and decisions would affect the laity directly and intimately'.⁷⁶ The Canadian bishops were among those who made interventions at Vatican II on the text which would become *Gaudium et Spes*, calling for less emphasis on the authority of the hierarchy. In October 1964, Bishop Alexander Carter of Sault Ste Marie spoke out on the 'sin of clericalism', and complained that laity had been consulted 'too little, too late'.⁷⁷ According to Rosemary Goldie, it was Bishop Gerard Coderre of Saint Jean who 'made the first substantial statement concerning women in Church and society' at the Council.⁷⁸

In October 1975, at their Fall Plenary Assembly, CCCC commissioned a survey on women's involvement in the official pastoral work of the Church in Canada. Its findings are unsurprising. Men outnumbered women in senior positions in the Canadian Church by 73 per cent to 27 per cent, with two thirds of the senior positions held by priests. Women were most prevalent in the fields of education, social and family services, and interestingly, women were in the majority of those exercising non-ordained ministries, such as Reader and Eucharistic Minister.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, in 1979, in the Preface to the Report, Archbishop Gilles Quétel of Rimouski, then President of CCCC, acknowledged the 'outstanding contribution' that women, both Religious and lay, have made to the Church, and observed that 'the unique talents and spirituality of laywomen and lay religious are urgently needed to deepen our faith in Jesus Christ and to

⁷⁶ Philip Pocock, 'Foreword' in *Brief to the Bishops: Canadian Catholic Laymen speak their minds* ed. Paul T. Harris (Toronto: Longmans Canada Ltd, 1965), 1.

⁷⁷ Alexander Carter, 'Intervention' 9/10/64, reported in *Documentation Catholique* (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Press, 1964), 1469.

⁷⁸ Rosemary Goldie, *From a Roman Window: Five Decades: The World, The Church and the Catholic Laity* (Sydney: Harper Collins Religious, 1998), 69.

⁷⁹ Goldie, *From a Roman Window* 46-47.

share his good news with all people'.⁸⁰ The Canadian bishops' aim was that the research findings would keep 'the debate on the actual participation of women in the life of the Church along empirical, rather than hypothetical lines' so that 'pastoral planning in this area may, thus, be increasingly issue oriented and project specific'.⁸¹

In 1981, the bishops commissioned a subsequent small survey of seventy women on participation. A more extensive consultation followed in the period leading up to the 1987 Synod on the Laity. Additionally, CCCB commissioned study materials in 1985 for parish use, to assist and develop the participation of women. The 'Women in the Church' study pack comprised materials for twelve sessions on different themes related to twelve recommendations that the bishops adopted at a Plenary Assembly in 1984 regarding women in the Church. These sessions covered a wide range of issues from the place of women in the Church, through women and sexuality, to women and men's co-responsibility in the Church.⁸² Throughout the CCCB documents, it is clear that the Canadian bishops saw the women's movement in society not as a threat, as did many of their confrères elsewhere, but as one of the current issues to which John XXIII in convoking Vatican II had urged the Church to respond.⁸³

In 2000, CCCB published *With Respect to Women*. This offered a history of CCCB initiatives concerning women in the Church and society from 1971-2000, documents their work to date, and affirmed their continued commitment to dialogue with women. It also recorded the influence of the Council and *Pacem in Terris* on these initiatives.⁸⁴ In particular, *With Respect to Women* credited Cardinal Flahiff for bringing the issue of women to the attention of the Canadian hierarchy. At the 1971 Synod of Bishops on Justice, held in Rome, Cardinal Flahiff began his intervention on ministries of women in the Church with the

⁸⁰ Gilles Quéllet, 'Preface' in *Survey on the Participation of Women in the Official Pastoral Work of the Catholic Church in Canada*, Hans W. Daigeler and Albert Dafour (Ottawa: CCCB Publications, 1979), 3.

⁸¹ Hans W. Daigeler and Albert Dafour, *Survey on the Participation of Women in the Official Pastoral Work of the Catholic Church in Canada* (Ottawa: CCCB Publications, 1979), 9.

⁸² Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Women in the Church* (Ottawa: CCCB Publications, 1985), 2.

⁸³ John XXIII, *Humanae Salutis*.

⁸⁴ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* 42.

question ‘Are new or changing ministries to be limited only to men?’⁸⁵ This apparently set an admirable precedent: at subsequent Synods, held between 1980 and 1998, CCCB representatives mentioned women in their interventions. Even at the 1990 Synod on Priestly Formation, the Canadian bishops kept women in mind, advocating a role for women in the formation of clergy.⁸⁶

CCCB also promoted the use of inclusive language through their Liturgy Office, and encouraged gender balance in all of its committees or working groups. In all of this, the bishops clearly articulated that their efforts arose from their understanding of the equal dignity of women and men, and were rooted in gospel values.

The participation of women in the Catholic Church in the USA

In 1980, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) wrote *Called and Gifted* as their response to the four ‘calls’ they identified arising from *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: the call to adulthood, the call to holiness, the call to ministry, and the call to community. For USCCB, ‘adulthood implies knowledge, experience and awareness, freedom and responsibility, and mutuality in relationships’.⁸⁷ The US bishops then admit, ‘it is true, however, that the experience of laypersons “as church members” has not always reflected this understanding of adulthood’.⁸⁸ Over the next decade, USCCB continued its deliberation on the laity, extending this into a particular focus on women and their role in the Church and society with a first draft of their pastoral response, *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption*, which was released for discussion across the dioceses in April 1988.⁸⁹ This ill-fated pastoral letter on women is worth considering here in detail because of the areas of contention it exposes. Theses proved to be so divisive that the report was never published.

⁸⁵ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *With Respect to Women* (Ottawa: CCCB Publications, 2000), 38.

⁸⁶ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *With Respect to Women* 6.

⁸⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted* (Washington DC: USCCB, 1980) http://old.usccb.org/laity/called_and_gifted.pdf, 2.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption*, the First Draft of the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Response to Women's Concerns for the Church and Society; (April 21, 1988, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*. Volume 17: No.45), 758-788.

The committee responsible for supervising the consultation and composing the draft document was composed of six bishops and seven female academic consultants. The draft text of *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* is made up of four chapters, entitled: Partners in Personhood, Partners in Relationships, Partners in Society, and Partners in the Church. In each chapter, the main theme is considered under four subheadings: Listening to voices of affirmation; Listening to voices of alienation; Reflecting on our heritage; and, lastly, Responding as bishops.⁹⁰ This structure witnesses to the fact that the discussions covered a broad spectrum of issues affecting women, ranging from sexuality to equal rights in the workplace, and the question of the role of the ordained ministries.

This first draft opens with the story of the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well (John 4:5-42). This is used to highlight the important work of passing on the faith that women have been involved in from the earliest days of the Church. Nonetheless, the authors acknowledge that changes in modern secular society have affected women. They identify the teaching of Vatican II, the encyclical *Pacem et Terris*, and *Justitia in Mundo*, a reflection on justice in the world produced by the 1971 Synod of bishops, as strong influences on their current deliberations of the role of women in the American Catholic Church.⁹¹ Their explicit recourse to principles of justice with regard to questions around the role of women reflects the emphasis in the US on human rights and equality legislation. The American egalitarian mentality was reflected in the desire to involve wide consultation both at national and diocesan level, although (as also in England) only women were invited to participate. In total, 75,000 women from 100 dioceses, 60 colleges, and 45 military bases took part over a period of four years. This highlights the size of the local Church for which USCCB is responsible.

Bishop Joseph Imesch of Joliet, the chair of the drafting committee, stressed that this first draft tried to report faithfully what they had heard in the consultations, even when these views were critical of the institutional Church. He noted also that the committee had repeatedly been asked not to formulate

⁹⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* 757.

⁹¹ Synod of Bishops, *Justitia et Mundo*, (Justice in the World) 1971 (Strangely on the Vatican website this document is currently only available in Portuguese).

the Report as if it was in response to a problem. Rather, respondents asked that the Report reflect the actual situation for women in the Church and society, including the areas of discrimination and exclusion. As with research in other Anglosphere countries, however, the committee had quickly realised that there was a dichotomy within the Catholic women participants: those women who saw themselves as supporters of feminism and those who rejected it.⁹² The US bishops were amazed to see the amount that women were already contributing to the life of the Church, and articulated their appreciation in the Report.⁹³ Nonetheless, and even taking account of the diversity among Catholic women, the research also identified common concerns: to be involved, to be of service, to be allowed to voice opinions, to be heard, respected and valued.⁹⁴ The process of this listening exercise meant the Report was a vehicle to articulate the opinions of women. This met with the bishops' intention to begin a conversation between the hierarchy and women, rather than formulate definitive statements of policy and practice.⁹⁵

The first draft records comments from women who have been affirmed and empowered by the teaching of Vatican II on the universal call to holiness, and the responsibility of all the baptised to be the Church and to serve the world.⁹⁶ It also records the words of the many women who felt they had not received equal treatment with men, of those who felt alienated or unable to use their gifts, and of those who reported many incidents of the 'sin of sexism' in the Church.⁹⁷ The bishops acknowledged in the report that 'sexist attitudes have also coloured Church teaching and practice over the centuries and still in our day', and they described sexism as a 'moral and social evil'.⁹⁸

The report also records the experience of single and married women, of those whose marriages had broken down, and of those in interchurch and interfaith marriages. Many pages (too many, in my opinion) are devoted to sexuality and sexual relations. There is also a brief recognition of the role that men have to

⁹² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption*, 10, 12.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 11. The report makes clear that the bishops collectively approve the document with constant use of 'we witnessed'; 'we bishops heard women'; 'we were told of' etc.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

play in this domain, in the insistence that men should accept responsibility for their part in procreation and parenting.⁹⁹

The report recognises that women's lives are still regulated by parameters set mainly by men, even though women are present in all strata of society.¹⁰⁰ It chronicles the specific difficulties faced by Hispanic women in a 'machismo culture', as well as those of women who have been victims of violence, or who suffer from poverty, and of the increasing number of elderly women in the community.¹⁰¹

Justice and education are identified as two of the priorities for the Church to address. Whilst the report puts aside the subject of women's ordination to the priesthood in view of the CDF ban on any discussion of this topic in *Inter Insigniores*, the bishops do suggest further research into the possibilities for women in diaconate ministry. At the same time, they acknowledge that laity, if appropriately commissioned, can already fulfil many diaconal functions, an important point to which we will return in chapter five.¹⁰² Affirming women's gifts, and their strength in resisting stereotypes, the report ends by stressing that women 'were and are disciples in the truest sense'.¹⁰³ It calls for the practical realisation of the 'cooperative mutuality' of all the baptised to be embraced, so that the recommendations of the document would be implemented in the life of the Church at every level.¹⁰⁴

Commentators report, that many American Catholics received the first draft positively, encouraged by the hierarchy's commitment to listen to women, and to take on board both their positive and negative opinions.¹⁰⁵ However, commentators also record substantial, and vocal, opposition from conservative laity and clergy to the draft statement.¹⁰⁶ Bishop Imesch tried to reassure both

⁹⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* 122.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁰⁵ For example, Susan Maloney, 'Church Door Opens for U.S. Women', *Los Angeles Times*, July 02, 1988, accessed February 01, 2013, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-07-02/local/me-5247_1_catholic-women.

¹⁰⁶ For example, John F. McCarthy, 'Editorial', *Living Tradition*, St. Louis MO: May 1988, accessed June 01, 2013, <http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt17.html>.

sides, pointing out that the committee had never considered recommending ordination of women as priests because, 'such change cannot come from this country', but also remarking: 'bishops do not usually make public confessions, or go into print and apologise. I think for the bishops to do that, as we have in this letter, is a very powerful statement to women'.¹⁰⁷

Amid the furore, the bishops sent the drafting committee back to the drawing board. A second draft, *One in Christ Jesus*, was published on April 3rd 1990.¹⁰⁸ The two-year drafting period had allowed the committee time to collect feedback from dioceses about the initial text. The second draft was shorter by eight pages, and influenced by two magisterial documents that had been published since the first draft: John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem* and *Christifideles Laici*. It presented the findings of the survey under four main themes: women - equal as persons; women - equal as persons in relationships; women - equal as persons in the Church; women - equal as persons in society.¹⁰⁹ The drafting committee admitted to the tensions evoked by the first draft, and cited the many appeals that they had received to cancel the project. However, they were adamant that the work was too important to be discarded and that 'we cannot turn back'.¹¹⁰

This second draft begins with an extended reflection on Church teaching and Christian anthropology, with frequent references to the writing of John Paul II, for whom this was a favoured subject. There is a clear exposition of two competing realities, namely, that women and men share a common humanity and thus equal dignity, yet that they are fundamentally different as persons because, as the report states, 'their identical natures are embodied in different ways'.¹¹¹ The text then considers marriage and motherhood and fatherhood,¹¹² with a full eight paragraphs devoted to family planning including a reiteration of

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Imesch, 'Women Priest Issue Died In Rome, Bishop Says', *Chicago Times* April 13, 1988, accessed February 01, 2014, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1988-04-13/news/8803080546_1_bishop-joseph-imesch-ordination-Church-teaching-and-practice.

¹⁰⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *One in Christ Jesus*, the Second Draft of the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Response to Women's Concerns for the Church and Society (April 5, 1990, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*. Volume 19: No.44): 718-740.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 50-70.

the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*.¹¹³ Nine paragraphs focus on the single life,¹¹⁴ followed by three paragraphs on friendship,¹¹⁵ one of which explicitly mentions homosexual persons.¹¹⁶

Section three, on equality as persons in the Church, is a scriptural and theological reflection about the witness of women in the past, and the important contribution to Church and society made by female Religious. The section on problems of exclusion discusses ministry, although the report make clear that it fully supports the official institutional position restricting the priesthood to men alone.¹¹⁷ They do, however, retain the pledge from the first draft to investigate the female diaconate and, in a positive response to criticisms voiced by clergy, undertake to instigate changes to seminary formation to ensure candidates are able to work collaboratively with women.¹¹⁸ Sections 130-132 specifically address Christian feminism, praising the efforts of feminists in challenging injustice and oppression, and the work of feminist theologians in bringing valuable new insights to the fore. This is followed by a section on inclusive language, elaborating on a similar section in the first draft, and promoting usage of inclusive language whenever appropriate.¹¹⁹

The last section, on equality in society, covers much the same ground as the first draft, acknowledging that sometimes the Church has failed to practise what it preaches to others.¹²⁰ The report concludes with an emphatic statement: 'equality is not a privilege to be earned by women, but a right'. This right is already theirs because of their creation in the image of God.¹²¹

This second draft also drew a mixed response of praise and criticism, one example of which came from the Centre Of Concern (COC) in Washington DC, established in 1971 by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, then a bishop, and the Jesuit Fr. Pedro Arrupe to respond directly to the 1971 Synod of Bishops' document *Justice in the World*. In June 1990, COC submitted a twenty-one page

¹¹³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *One in Christ Jesus*, 71-78.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 79-87. This is unusual, as the Church is often accused of neglecting the single life.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 88-90.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 115-118.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 123.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 133-135.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 151.

¹²¹ Ibid., 168.

commentary on the second draft. They found the draft text to be overly confusing and contradictory, in some sections affirming the fundamental equality of both sexes, in others reverting to stereotypical assignation of roles and responsibilities according to gender. Their analysis confirms my own reading of the second draft: while equality is promoted as foundational, the stress on difference between the genders allows for inequality in certain areas. COC also identified ‘two competing theologies’ in the report: the theology of ‘friendship/reconciliation’ used when the consideration is of women in society, and a contrasting theology of ‘law/right order’ which comes into play whenever women’s role in the Church is discussed.¹²² COC offered four recommendations, suggesting further study and reflection on equality in the Church, and asking that the bishops neither approve the draft nor attempt to issue another version.

Notwithstanding this recommendation a third draft, *Called to be one in Christ Jesus*, was put in train. In June 1992, two years after the publication of the second draft, it appeared on the bishops’ agenda for debate. This third version of the text, at 14 pages half the length of the first, begins with an overview of the history of the pastoral, now nine years in the making.¹²³ In the interval between the second and third drafts, the Vatican had called the USCCB leaders to Rome for an unprecedented international consultation on this proposed pastoral letter about women. Afterwards, Bishop Imesch and Bishop Matthew Clark, who were part of the US delegation, reported to the Catholic News Service (CNS) that the Pope and others had expressed concerns about the content of earlier drafts.¹²⁴ It is clear from Archbishop Pilarczyk of Cincinnati’s comments to CNS that the USCCB had amended the third draft in the light of the Vatican’s response.¹²⁵ This compromise is evident in the greater emphasis on human anthropology and on the role of Mary as model of womanhood, although the report continues to identify the role of women as a ‘sign of the times’ that the Church needed to address.¹²⁶

¹²² James E. Hug, et al. *Comments on the Second Draft of NCCB Pastoral Letter on Women* (Washington DC: Center for Concern, 1990), 1.

¹²³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Called to be One in Christ Jesus*, the Third Draft of the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Response to Women’s Concerns for the Church and Society; (April 23, 1992, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*. Volume 21. No.46): 762-776.

¹²⁴ Camilla J. Kari, *Public Witness: The Pastoral Letters of the American Catholic Bishops* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 138.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹²⁶ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called to be One in Christ Jesus* 8.

The third draft focused first on sexual difference, then on human relationships, before turning lastly to consider diversity of gifts and service in the Church.¹²⁷ It also, and for the first time in the complex genesis of this document, includes a section specifically addressing the witness of laywomen and draws attention to the removal of some restrictions on the involvement of women in the Church by the 1983 Code of Canon Law. The report ends with twenty-five proposals. Some of these address inequalities in society, others relate to pastoral work already underway regarding young people, children, marriage, and family support, while still others take forward the questions of formation, collaboration, and the fostering of more inclusivity in the Church.¹²⁸

Despite, or because of, the earlier Vatican intervention, the bishops again rejected this third draft.¹²⁹ Only two months later, draft number four was submitted for approval. This fourth draft was three pages longer and retained much of the content of the third draft, although the tone is quite different in relation to women. For example, this draft adds a new section addressed to sexism and social patterns where ‘radical feminism’ is considered as on a par with the evil of sexism.¹³⁰ Also, this text is far less critical of the clergy: whereas, each previous draft had contained a passage describing a man’s inability to relate positively to women as ‘a negative indicator for fitness for ordination’¹³¹, this is omitted from the fourth draft. Gone too are the voices of women from the original consultation. This version is a very different document from that originally envisaged, which represented a genuine attempt to listen and learn from the articulated experiences of women.¹³² The bishops voted in favour of this fourth draft by 137-110 votes. As it did not receive the necessary two-thirds majority for approval, there was an impasse. Cardinal Bernardin then intervened to suggest that instead of the Conference issuing this latest draft as

¹²⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called to be One in Christ Jesus*, 10.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹²⁹ Kari, *Public Witness*, 142.

¹³⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *One in Christ Jesus*, the Fourth Draft of the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Response to Women’s Concerns for the Church and Society; (September 10, 1992, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*. Volume 22. No.13): 50.

¹³¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *One in Christ Jesus* (Second draft), 123.

¹³² Paragraph 133 includes a reference to Christine Cheyne’s *Made in God’s Image*, which resulted from research done for the New Zealand bishops and will be considered later in this chapter. However, the USCCB mention it only in order to reinforce their support for the reservation of the priesthood to men.

an official document, they could instead approve it merely as a statement of the bishops' Committee on Women. This was agreed.¹³³

Bishop Imesch, who had been involved over the nine years and four draft versions of the pastoral, spoke frankly to the conference about the frustrations of the drafting team who had somehow managed to: 'alienate at one time or another every identifiable male or female group along the way'. He praised the team's hard work and perseverance despite the berating of their work for being 'overdone ... underdone ... or fatally flawed'.¹³⁴ Notwithstanding the result, Imesch defended the process, and spoke of the impact of all the personal testimonies he had heard from women from across the country, which he urged the bishops not to forget. He also reminded the USCCB that although women had justifiable cause to receive serious consideration by the hierarchy: 'the reality of women's concerns does not depend on a vote of the bishops'.¹³⁵ With or without a pastoral letter, he urged the bishops to ensure they promoted the equality of women at every opportunity in the Church, as this would show the world at large that they had 'crossed the bridge from words to action'.¹³⁶

In 1994, the bishops again decried sexism:

we can say with certainty that discrimination against women contradicts the will of Christ. We are painfully aware that sexism defined as 'unjust discrimination based on sex', is still present in some members of the Church. We reject sexism and pledge renewed efforts to guard against it in Church teaching and practice.¹³⁷

That same year, three feminist theologians, Sr Miriam Therese Winter MMS, Adair Lummis of Hartford Seminary, and Allison Stokes of the Women's Interfaith Institute in Massachusetts, published their findings of a survey of Catholic and Protestant women in the US. Recording the experiences of hundreds of women

¹³³ Joseph Bernardin, 'Motion' in 'Document on Women's Concerns Debated' (December 03, 1992, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*. Volume 22. No. 25): 418.

¹³⁴ Joseph Imesch, 'Intervention' in 'Document on Women's Concerns Debated' (December 03, 1992, *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*. Volume 22. No. 25): 420.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Strengthening the Bonds of Peace*, (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 1994).

as the ‘essential data’, they identified frustrations but also strong affiliations that kept these women ‘defecting in place’.¹³⁸

The bishops’ original plan of issuing an incisive document on women in the Church seemed to have been suppressed. However, ten years after the first ‘Partners’ draft, the document *From Words to Deeds*, published in 1998, offered at least some compensation. According to the bishops, the aim of this pastoral statement was:

to encourage all Church leaders—lay, ordained, vowed religious—to accept and act upon the Church’s teaching about the equality and gifts of women, their rightful place in Church leadership, and the importance of collaboration between women and men.¹³⁹

The US bishops gave credit to the influence on their reflections of ‘our brother bishops in England and Wales’. They had unanimously agreed with the CBCEW statement from three years earlier: ‘that the manner in which the Church lives its common life is part of the sign it gives to the world’.¹⁴⁰

From Words to Deeds also generated a response. In 1999, the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators (NACPA) instituted a study of women in diocesan leadership positions, which highlighted the fact that by this time women held 50 per cent of administrative positions within dioceses, including 25 per cent of senior level posts.¹⁴¹ However, this research did not consider the impact of women’s involvement on the local Church, nor women’s roles in decision-making processes, nor the barriers to women’s participation.

Aware that more research was needed, and of a more qualitative kind, in 2000 a short questionnaire was sent to a select group of 378 women, all holding senior positions, nominated by bishops from their dioceses. In total 233 completed surveys were returned. 60 per cent of those surveyed were laywomen and 40

¹³⁸ Miriam Therese Winter and Adair Lummis and Allison Stokes, *Defecting in Place: Women Claiming Responsibility for Their Own Spiritual Lives* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 7.

¹³⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, *From Words to Deeds: Continuing Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church* (Washington, D.C: USCCB Publishing, 1998), 2.

¹⁴⁰ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *The Sign We Give: Report from the Working Party on Collaborative Ministry* (Chelmsford: CBCEW, 1995).

¹⁴¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Women in Society and in the Church. ‘Women’s Experiences in Diocesan Leadership Positions: A Progress Report’ (1998) accessed February 01, 2015, <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/womens-issues/index.cfm>.

per cent were consecrated Religious. 80 per cent were Caucasian. Over 90 per cent were educated to university level. 76 per cent were between 50 and 60 years of age.¹⁴² In autumn 2001, a Report by the Bishops' Committee on Women in Society and in the Church was submitted to USCCB together with the results of the survey and the report of the inaugural conference of women in leadership positions, held in March 2001 in Washington DC.¹⁴³ A repeat survey undertaken in 2003 indicated a 2 per cent increase in the number of female occupants of leadership positions, with a 1 per cent increase in the number of women holding the most senior posts, compared to the 1999 results. It found that larger dioceses were less likely to employ women than the smaller dioceses.¹⁴⁴

The US bishops had also devoted much time and effort to understanding and developing teaching on 'lay ecclesial ministry', over a series of documents from 1990 to 2005, beginning with *Gifts Unfolding: the Lay Vocation Today with Questions for Tomorrow* in 1990.¹⁴⁵ These documents focused on the contributions of both laymen and women professionally employed by the Church, yet there had been no research involving the general Catholic population. Perhaps because of the furore that met their earlier attempts, the bishops were nervous of the issues that might arise. Instead, discussions and symposia were organised, such as the 'Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry' colloquium held in Dayton, Ohio in May 1997, during which bishops, theologians, and practitioners listened to papers from nine theologians and then engaged in small group discussion. According to Zeni Fox, no official statistics were available at that time about the number or variety of ministries laity were engaged in with the US Church. However, a study of parish ministry found that 85 per cent of

¹⁴² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, 'Women's Experiences in Diocesan Leadership Positions Follow up report (2000). <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/womens-issues/upload/USCCB-FLWY-Women-s-Experiences-in-Diocesan-Leadership-Positions.pdf>.

¹⁴³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, 'Consultation with Women in Diocesan Leadership Report' (2001) accessed February 01, 2015, <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/womens-issues/upload/USCCB-FLWY-Consultation-with-Women-in-Diocesan-Leadership.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, 'Women in Diocesan Leadership Positions: Progress Report' (2003) accessed February 01, 2015, <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/womens-issues/consultation-with-women-in-diocesan-leadership.cfm>.

¹⁴⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Gifts Unfolding: The Lay Vocation Today with Questions for Tomorrow* (1990); *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 1993).

those in paid employment positions in parishes were women.¹⁴⁶ The canonist Fr. John Beal examined the opportunities for the laity to be involved in Church governance, arguing persuasively that an ‘imperial episcopacy’ needed to be replaced not by a democracy, but by the consultative model adopted by Cyprian of Carthage, which retained bishops as local leaders, who exercised their authority only after consulting with the lay faithful.¹⁴⁷ These deliberations took place only three months before the publication of *Ecclesiae de Mystério*, which prohibited the very developments of lay ministry that the US bishops were trying to promote. Arguably, the fact that the term ‘lay ecclesial ministry’ is still used in the US Church shows what little impact *Ecclesiae de Mystério* had.¹⁴⁸

Some of the concerns raised in the reports considered here probably no longer relate to the realities facing the American Catholic Church today. The significant influx of Hispanic Catholics is considered to have changed the face of the Church in the USA,¹⁴⁹ and the spectre of clerical child abuse still casts a long shadow.¹⁵⁰ There is now a clear divide between the pronouncements of the hierarchy, and the opinions of an increasingly highly educated laity and emancipated Religious men and women.

The participation of women in the Catholic Church in New Zealand (Aotearoa)

As we have already seen, bishops in the southern hemisphere were also sensitive to the existence of concerns about the role of women and in New Zealand, the issue of women’s position in the Church had been on the agenda of the Commission for Justice, Peace, and Development since 1980. Amid a growing awareness of the dangers of sexism in society and the Church, motivated by

¹⁴⁶ Zeni Fox, ‘Ecclesial Lay Ministers: an Overview’ in *Together in God’s Service. Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry*, USCCB Committee on the Laity. (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 1998), 7.

¹⁴⁷ John Beal, ‘Lay People and Church Governance: Oxymoron or Opportunity’ in *Together in God’s Service. Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry*, USCCB Committee on the Laity (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 1998), 122.

¹⁴⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry* (Washington DC: USCCB Publishing, 2005).

¹⁴⁹ For example: Hosffman Ospino, *Hispanic Ministry in Catholic Parishes: A Summary Report of Findings from the National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry* (Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, 2014).

¹⁵⁰ For example: The John Jay College Report, *The Causes and Content of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010* (Washington DC: USCCB, 2011).

Catholic Social Teaching principles, and influenced by the work of the US bishops, the decision was made to fund a study.¹⁵¹

Christine Cheyne's research was undertaken in 1990 for the New Zealand Bishop's Conference; it resulted in the report *Made in God's Image: a project researching sexism in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa (New Zealand)*.¹⁵² This work was instigated in response to the New Zealand bishops' desire to implement the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, specifically the Decree concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*. In this document, the Council Fathers had made clear that only when bishops discovered and understood the breadth of social situations affecting the people they were responsible for, would they be able to fulfil their function as pastors and teachers. To increase their knowledge bishops should make use of all 'suitable methods, especially social research'.¹⁵³

Cheyne's methodology ensured that data from all six of the New Zealand dioceses was analysed regarding Church structures and practices, but her work was on a relatively small scale with 387 written or taped submissions received from individuals or groups, and only 44 individual women interviewed. Her participants were all female and because of the nature of the survey, a truly representative analysis was not possible. There was controversy around the project from its outset, because of its specific focus on sexism. Some regarded any research on Church praxis as hostile and inappropriate. As a result, even before the findings, the research had been tainted by suspicion. Sadly, Cheyne's research was therefore fated to have little effect.

The Antipodean bishops endorsed Christine Cheyne's report but were careful to state that this did not mean that they necessarily agreed with all its findings or recommendations. Among the twenty key points articulated by Cheyne, there was a recommendation that the New Zealand bishops not reintroduce the permanent diaconate. Another was that they allow copies of the report to be widely circulated to facilitate continuing discussion. As with most of the

¹⁵¹ Chris Orsman, and Peter Zwa, *Church in the World - Statements on social issues 1979-1997 by New Zealand's Catholic Bishops* (Wellington: Catholic Office for Social Justice, 1997), 106.

¹⁵² Christine Cheyne, *Made in God's Image* (Wellington: Catholic Commission JPD, 1990).

¹⁵³ Vatican II, *Christus Dominus* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), 16.

Anglosphere research projects, there was a call for a greater gender balance in diocesan and national committees and boards, and for endorsement of inclusive language as normative in the Church. Similar too, was Cheyne's proposal for consultative bodies to be established, enabling the bishops to dialogue with women directly, the request for more opportunities for formation, and a continuation of research and data gathering. Cheyne was uncompromising: implementing any of her recommendations in isolation would not address the issues uncovered, nor would a tokenistic response. Rather, she emphasised that the focus must be on the prime outcome, that is, the inclusion and recognition of women in the Church as equal in dignity and value with men.¹⁵⁴

The New Zealand bishops referred Cheyne's report to a theological review panel consisting of both clergy and laity, before issuing their official response, *Made in God's Image: Part II*, in 1991. In this statement, the bishops acknowledged that equality for women was not yet a reality in the Church, causing hurt to some women, and depriving the faith community of women's many gifts and expertise. They hoped that the research project had shown their willingness to improve the situation, and they pledged to implement 'those changes which lie within our ability and competence'.¹⁵⁵ The bishops endorsed inclusive language, and promised resources to provide access to theological education for laity, and more opportunities for them to use the skills they acquired in ministries within the Church.¹⁵⁶ They also authorised the preparation of policies and guidelines to promote gender equity within Church committees and organisation, whilst maintaining that training for priests and seminarians in collaborative working with women had already been in place 'for some time now'.¹⁵⁷ The theological anthropology of John Paul II obviously influenced the bishops' response, as it had in the USA. Here this teaching is utilised to set out the differences between men and women that, according to John Paul, result in immutable distinctions. The statement portrays women as stereotypically nurturing and relational because, as the bishops express it, women 'understand more easily that human identity is ordered to mutual self giving'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Cheyne, *Made in God's Image*, 78.

¹⁵⁵ Orsman and Zwa, *Church in the World* 110.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 111.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 119.

The considerable opposition to the research combined with the bishops' desire to avoid controversy, both at home and with the Vatican, no doubt influenced this muted response. Yet, whatever discouragement women felt at some of the content of the response, they could be consoled by the unequivocal declaration of the bishops that 'to be concerned with discrimination against women is to be concerned with justice'.¹⁵⁹

The participation of women in the Catholic Church in Ireland

The historian Caitriona Beaumont provides an insight into the historical influence of the attitudes of the Catholic Church on life in Ireland. She concludes that there is 'no doubt that traditional assumptions about the role of women in twentieth-century Irish society mirrored the teaching of the Catholic Church' as promulgated by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891.¹⁶⁰ This would tend to indicate that despite the Second Vatican Council, Irish Church leaders had little interest in promoting the involvement of women, or laity in general, in the local Church.

However, in 1991 the Irish Catholic bishops, influenced by *Christifideles Laici*, supported an investigation into the position of women in the Church by the Irish Commission of Justice & Peace. Each member of the commission was asked to invite female participants, resulting in a consultation of 66 women in a small-scale survey. From this the Commission decided that a working group on Women in the Church should be established and a study day held in 1993. The 120 female participants, including the 66 previously surveyed, were able to move the process forward from consultation to dialogue, assisted by insightful presentations from Fr. Dermot Lane and Dr Sheelagh Drudy. The working group also delivered a series of scriptural study programmes from 1994 until 1997, centred on a paper from Sr. Celine Magnion OP about women in the New Testament. The participants of these study days submitted feedback and comment to form a report, which the bishops favourably received.¹⁶¹ By the end of the second round of scriptural study, in 1997, participants noted less apathy

¹⁵⁹ Orsman and Zwa, *Church in the World*, 111.

¹⁶⁰ Caitriona Beaumont, 'Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948', *Women's History Review* 6:4 (1997): 564.

¹⁶¹ Una Coughlan, *Women in Dialogue* (Dublin: Irish Commission of Justice and Peace, 1997), 6.

and scepticism towards their attitudes and felt that ‘a lot of fear of change had been dispelled’.¹⁶² Participants called for adult faith formation to be available for both clergy and laity alike. They were firmly convinced that ‘the laity must be centrally involved at all levels of ecclesial life if the Church is to be a credible witness in today’s world’, and they called for specific structures ‘which not only acknowledge but actively seek and promote the witness of women’.¹⁶³

However, such hopeful aspirations were to result in disappointment as the institutional Church in Ireland resisted change. That is, until the clerical sex abuse scandals of recent years destroyed the credibility of the hierarchy, and affected a paradigm shift in the faithful, from unquestioning loyalty and obedience, to viewing the Church as dishonest and irrelevant. In 2013, Gerry O’Hanlon SJ could characterise the Irish perspective on the Catholic Church as possessing:

a teaching authority that is increasingly ignored on important existential issues, a laity that feels disempowered, an anachronistic attitude to women, a lack of effective collegiality and *communio* that contradicts the Church’s own professed position, and a silencing of so-called dissident voices.¹⁶⁴

The participation of women in the Catholic Church in Scotland

Across the Irish Sea, the Catholic bishops of Scotland likewise seem not to have thought the issue of the participation of women in the Church worth discussion or documentation in the immediate aftermath of the Council. However, in March 1998, the Bishops Conference approved ‘*Women in the Church and Society*’, a statement on human rights drawn up by the Women’s Policy Group of the Justice and Peace Commission, that was influenced by conciliar and post-conciliar teaching. This statement recognized that, historically, women had been: ‘under represented among the laity who are becoming increasingly involved in the structures of consultation and collaboration’.¹⁶⁵ This same Justice and Peace group conducted a Gender Audit of lay involvement in parishes that resulted in a report to the Scottish Catholic bishops in May 2000.

¹⁶² Coughlan, *Women in Dialogue* 30.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 46.

¹⁶⁴ Gerry O’Hanlon, ‘Fifty Years after Vatican II, Irish Catholicism is at a crossroads’, accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie/2013/02/at-a-crossroads-irish-catholicism-fifty-years-after-vatican-ii/>.

¹⁶⁵ Bishops’ Conference of Scotland, *Women in the Church and Society*, (Glasgow: BCS, 1988).

The incentive for this audit was not Vatican II but was a response to the World Council of Churches call for an Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (EDCSW) in 1988. At the end of the WCC decade, leaders of the Scottish Christian Churches signed the *Declaration of Dunblane* after taking part in a consultation 'Call me by my name, not my label', which focused on five major areas identified as of concern for women worldwide:

1. Poverty and economic injustice;
2. Racism and xenophobia;
3. Violence and abuse;
4. Theological education
5. The participation of women in Church life, worship, and decision-making.

The Scottish Catholic gender audit in 2000 undertook to measure progress on item five with questionnaires sent to all 460 Catholic parishes.¹⁶⁶ This resulted in the return of 236 completed forms, which record involvement of women alongside laymen in many areas of parish ministry and life. The results show that an equal involvement of the sexes was only in the roles of Reader, Eucharistic Minister, and Parish Pastoral Council membership. Most of the additional comments submitted expressed concern about declining congregations and the difficulty of getting laity, regardless of gender, to take on responsibility. The respondents were mainly Parish Priests so they do not give any indication of the experiences or views of lay parishioners on the subject, which is disappointing, as is the fact that no other research has been undertaken since.

These various Anglosphere surveys reflect a consensus of concern and opinions about the participation of women within the Catholic Church. Women are reported to be contributing considerably to the life of the Church, although mainly in ancillary roles, and there is concern that more efforts to ensure gender equality are needed to fully utilise women's skills and talents for the common good.

¹⁶⁶ Scottish Justice and Peace Commission, *Gender Audit* (Glasgow: BCS, 2000).

Ecumenical experiences of the participation of women in the Church

Because of the ecumenical impetus to the Scottish Catholic consideration of women it is important to consider briefly how the WCC and ACTS, which have been seen to have influence here, and the two other main Christian denominations in this country, namely the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church, include women in mission and ministry. The Catholic community is a minority in Scotland therefore ecumenism is a necessity, as well as best praxis. The importance of receptive ecumenism, that is, listening to, and learning from, the experiences of our fellow Christians, makes these insights valuable, although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this area fully.¹⁶⁷

Society needs to consider the Christian community as united in an authentic living out of gospel values if it is to be a valid witness. All Christian denominations proclaim the equality of men and women, and some have already accepted women into ordained ministry and in leadership positions. However, research shows that these other traditions also face issues of discrimination against women, and inequality in practice.

The World Council of Churches had, since the 1940's, been trying to build mutuality between men and women, which it saw as explicit in Christian teaching. A threefold focus evolved: firstly, the strengthening of women with a view to ensuring that they felt valued and included; secondly, an exploration of the conditions for those women employed by the Churches; and thirdly, the issue of the ordination of women.¹⁶⁸ A survey conducted in 1946 formed the basis for a report to WCC by Dr Kathleen Bliss in 1950. Here she stated unequivocally, that allowing women to be ordained had not solved the question of the status of women within the Churches.¹⁶⁹ In 1955, the WCC commission on women was renamed the Department of the Man-Woman Relationship in Church and Society, to avoid any sense that they were promoting any continuance of the segregation of women. This group had a prime and inspiring aim, which was to make

¹⁶⁷ Paul D. Murray, 'Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda', in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 6-19.

¹⁶⁸ Susannah Herzel, *A Voice for Women*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981), 16.

¹⁶⁹ Kathleen Bliss, *The Service and status of Women in the Churches*, (London: SCM Press, 1952).

themselves defunct by integrating women and women's issues completely into the WCC structures and agendas.¹⁷⁰

Catholic women began to become involved with WCC in the 1960's, and during Vatican II Cardinal Willebrandt encouraged Madeleine Barot from WCC to meet with the female *Auditoras* at the Council. In 1967 one hundred women attended a conference on 'The Christian Woman Co-Artisan in a Changing Society' in Taizé and from this was formed the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group in 1968. Paul VI gave an audience to this group in 1970 and praised their work, yet just two years later, due to the demise of the Committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX) the mandate for this group was rescinded. SODEPAX had been set up as a joint consultative body between the Vatican and the WCC that attempted to establish a process for addressing the crucial issues facing humanity, among which would have been the role of women.¹⁷¹

The rise of the feminist movement affected the WCC too. Women have been conspicuously present at WCC Assemblies from the time of the Nairobi Assembly held in 1975, which also elected women to the WCC Presidium for the first time. In October 1978, the WCC issued the report *Towards a Fuller Community of Women and Men in the Church*. In 1981, an international consultation on 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church' took place in Sheffield. In his opening remarks at this conference, Archbishop Robert Runcie warned of the dangers of intensifying the problem of clericalism by concentrating solely on women's ordination, as if this was the only ministry that had any value.¹⁷² However, at the end of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the WCC's Faith and Order Standing Commission had to return the focus to the issue of women's ordination because by then it was causing some difficulty in ecumenical relations.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Herzel, *A Voice for Women* 23-25.

¹⁷¹ Joseph J. Spae, 'SODEPAX: An ecumenical and experimental approach to world needs', *The Ecumenical Review*, 26: 1, (1974): 88-99.

¹⁷² Constance Parvey, (Editor) *The Community of Men and Women in the Church* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 3.

¹⁷³ See Melanie A. May, 'Faith and Order on Women's Ordination' (1998) accessed February 1, 2014, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century/member-Churches/special-commission-on-participation-of-orthodox-Churches/sub-committee-ii-style-ethos-of-our-life-together/faith-and-order-on-womens-ordination?set_language=en.

The Catholic hierarchy at Vatican II had identified the vital need to work towards rapprochement with the Orthodox Church, a full member of the WCC, to return the Churches to full communion because ‘from their very origins the Churches of the East have had a treasury from which the Church of the West has amply drawn for its liturgy, spiritual tradition, and jurisprudence’.¹⁷⁴ John Paul II echoed the importance of this relationship in poetic terms as ‘like the two “lungs” of a single body’.¹⁷⁵ The Orthodox Church joined in the WCC decade of women and took part in the same surveys and studies as the other denominations, also finding a higher proportion of women in congregations than men. At that time, the perception of Orthodox women was as faithful adherents, who relished the liturgical life of the Church and were happy to serve silently and submissively.¹⁷⁶ Marie Assaad records that the patriarchal cultures in which Orthodoxy flourished did not encourage girls to pursue education, and considered it normative for female lives to be regulated by fathers, then husbands, and then sons. This cultural background of disempowerment meant that women did not question the Church’s male clerical structures, and the Church in turn corroborated the Old Testament prescriptions against women, with acceptance of some elements of archaic cultural practices.¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Behr-Sigel places the debate about the role of women in Orthodoxy within the tension of two ecclesiological interpretations, namely the Church seen as hierarchical and patriarchal, and the Church understood as a mystery of communion.¹⁷⁸ The prime place of Mary, the *Theotokos*, within Orthodoxy had critical impact on any consideration of the role of women in the Church, and cultural traditions that revered women only as virgins or mothers reinforced this. The Orthodox Church however, had retained the ministry of Deaconesses until the 12th century, so there was precedent for more active participation, and strong role models among the Mothers of the Church such as Macrina and Theosevia who worked alongside the more renowned Fathers e.g. Gregory of Nyssa and Basil. Yet, as with the Catholic hierarchy, Orthodox bishops while stressing the equal dignity of all human persons made in God’s image, still stress

¹⁷⁴ Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 14.

¹⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Euntes in Mundum* (1988), 12, cf. *Redemptoris Mater* 34. Accessed February 1, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jpii_apl_25011988_euntes-in-mundum-universum_it.html.

¹⁷⁶ Marie Assaad, ‘Challenges facing Orthodox women’ in *With Love and with Passion*, ed. Elizabeth Raiser, et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 150.

¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 8.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

the essential difference between women and men in their embodiment that predicates specific distinction of roles and responsibilities as the Orthodox Bishop Nicholas of Brooklyn wrote in his 2014 blog: ‘nowadays, more than ever, women play an essential and indispensable role in the family’.¹⁷⁹

In Scotland the history of women’s engagement in the Church of Scotland can be traced back well into the nineteenth century. Women were involved in the church’s mission, both in Scotland and abroad. In 1886, the Church of Scotland agreed to form a Women’s Guild, in part in response to the argument of Professor Archibald Hamilton Charteris, biblical scholar and Moderator of the General Assembly, that the gifts of all the members of the Church should be discerned and utilised.¹⁸⁰ Charteris was no revolutionary feminist: as he envisaged the Guild as a band of voluntary workers under the control of the minister.¹⁸¹ A year later, in 1887, the Church founded the Order of Deaconesses. Single women, mainly those of independent means who could devote themselves full time to Church work, were trained at the Deaconesses’ House in Edinburgh before being sent out on mission to deprived areas. For many Presbyterian young women, this proved to be a unique way to engage in work for the Church that previously had only been open to men. Although there were many similarities to the vocation of Catholic nuns, these Deaconesses did not take vows and were free to marry, although this meant that they then had to give up their ministry.¹⁸² In 1894, the Women’s Missionary College in Edinburgh began to train women for mission at home or abroad, with Annie Small as the first Principal.¹⁸³ In 1910, Frances Melville became the first Scottish woman to gain the degree of Bachelor of Divinity.¹⁸⁴ In 1919, the General Assembly accepted the ordained office of Deacon to which the Church could appoint women for a period of three years, while men could be ordained for life. In the 1960’s, in line with the developments for women in wider society, initiatives allowed

¹⁷⁹ The Right Reverend Bishop Nicholas, ‘The Role of Women in the Orthodox Church’ www.antiochian.org/role-women-orthodox-Church (03/02/2014).

¹⁸⁰ Lesley Orr MacDonald, *A unique and glorious mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 2000), 66.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

women to become Elders, from 1966, and Ministers from 1968.¹⁸⁵ The Church had moved a long way from John Knox's ideology: it was part of God's natural order that women should 'live in submission and obedience to men.'¹⁸⁶ In 2007, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland commissioned research into the reason for the disproportionately low number of women compared to men presenting for ministerial training. The research results did not fully explain this phenomenon, but did highlight some of the negative perspectives that were factors in many women not considering ministry, or withdrawing from the process after beginning training. Lezley Kennedy reported that ordained women recounted "war stories", stories of rejection, intolerance, bullying and patronising, including from amongst their male colleagues'.¹⁸⁷ Kennedy also uncovered widespread concern about the 'lack of structural change', i.e. 'the attitudes of some male ministers, and the lack of a complete acceptance across the Church of the ordination of women ... in particular the de facto sanctioning of those who 'opt out' of accepting women's ministry is hurtful'.¹⁸⁸

The first woman appointed as Moderator of the General Assembly was Dr Alison Elliot in 2004. She was an Elder and the first lay person to be chosen since the 16th century, meaning that a man was deputed to fulfil any ministerial functions during her year in office. In 2007, Shelagh Kesting became the first women minister to be appointed as Moderator. Six years later Lorna Hood took office as the third female Moderator in 450 years.¹⁸⁹ In an interview with the BBC in September 2013, Lorna Hood was honest about the fact that sexism is still a problem within the Church of Scotland. During her term in office, she had been horrified to learn, of the number of ordained women who were being prevented from reaching their potential within the Church.¹⁹⁰ In 2011, Anne Logan's PhD research on the ordained ministry of women in the Church of Scotland highlighted the continual problems of gender equality in the Kirk. Logan postulates that 'women may be the perpetrators of oppression, not just its

¹⁸⁵ Lesley Orr MacDonald, (Editor) *In Good Company: Women in the Ministry* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 1999), 13. Note that in 1963 Mary Lusk (Levison) petitioned the General Assembly that she be ordained minister.

¹⁸⁶ Orr MacDonald, *A unique and glorious mission* 15.

¹⁸⁷ Lezley Kennedy, 'Report to General Assembly on Women in Ministry' (2010) 3.4.6.1.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.4.7.

¹⁸⁹ See <http://www.geni.com/projects/Moderators-of-the-General-Assembly-of-the-Church-of-Scotland/15939>.

¹⁹⁰ Anon, 'Church of Scotland sexism "hindering women" in office, Moderator warns'. BBC News Scotland interview September 07, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-24001033>.

victims. By continuing with authoritarian and patriarchal models of ministry are women clergy contributing to a less than fully Christian Church'.¹⁹¹ A recent study, by Julia Ogilvy, an Elder of the Church of Scotland, records twelve interviews with prominent Christian women across the denominations. This provides additional insights that demonstrate that the role of women within all Christian communities is still a hot topic of debate.¹⁹²

In 1990, the alliance of nine Churches that formed the Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) formed a committee on women's participation, the Network of Ecumenical Women in Scotland (NEWS) with Sr. Mary Shanahan, a Catholic Religious from Glasgow as first Associate Secretary. This was a fruit of long engagement by women in the Churches, and particular reflection on the WCC decade in solidarity with women so from its inception, NEWS wanted to avoid becoming a women only ghetto, despite its focus on issues that had impact on women's lives, namely, communication, language, violence against women and local activism.¹⁹³ NEWS commissioned a pilot study regarding women and their place in the Churches, with the intention of adding a local dimension to the worldwide discussions on the subject, aware that there was still a real sense that gender inequality prevented the development so badly needed by the Church. The NEWS study made eight recommendations focusing on two factors the research had highlighted as preventing change: the power structures existing within the Churches, and a culture that devalued the feminine. The study also suggested two models of being Church which were more inclusive: the discipleship of equals and the Church of hospitality both focused on a vision which recognised the gifts and value of every person, and looked for ways to utilise these for the common good without conflict.¹⁹⁴ Finally, the study stressed the need to let go of what was comfortable in order to embrace change, little knowing that this would come back to haunt them when in 2000, ACTS underwent a review of structures and finance. This included the gradual

¹⁹¹ Anne T. Logan, 'Ordained Ministry of women in the Church of Scotland: the first forty years' (2011, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow), 30.

¹⁹² Julia Ogilvy, *Women in Waiting: Prejudice at the heart of the Church* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014).

¹⁹³ Lesley Orr, *A Good News Story. An account of the work of NEWS 1990-2011* (Alloa: ACTS, 2013), 3.

¹⁹⁴ Margaret Hart, *To have a voice: Network of Ecumenical women in Scotland* (Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, 1995), 52.

dismantling of NEWS, albeit with the hope women's concerns would now be fully integrated into ACTS.¹⁹⁵

In 2010, the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC), Scotland's third largest denomination after the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church, conducted a gender audit. The SEC had admitted women to the ministerial priesthood in 1994 and to the episcopate in 2002, although at the time of the 2010 audit no women had in fact been ordained bishop (and in 2015 this is still the case). The report is clear:

It is important that women participate equally in decision-making bodies not only because we are each made in God's image, but also because women's experience informs decisions about Church and society, about mission at home and abroad, about best use of resources.¹⁹⁶

Interestingly, there are clear parallels between the SEC's finding and those of the Catholic and Church of Scotland surveys. For example, according to Elaine Cameron:

The cultural history of the Church is one of male-dominance. This is slowly changing, but gendered stereotypic assumptions still prevail - short changing both men and women into unequal relationships. This is reflected in the way we use language.¹⁹⁷

A very important point with regard to the debate about Catholic women's participation is the SEC finding that: 'gender equality is not an ordination issue, but an issue of right relationships, and of men and women working together as equals, not in dominance or discrimination'.¹⁹⁸

These few examples evidence that the participation of women in Church mission and ministry has been an issue of equal concern for other Christian denominations too.

Development of research and dialogue in the Church

The research we have considered in this chapter could lead us to believe that in 2015, the situation in the Catholic Church would be one of increased equality and collaboration. Instead, within the Catholic Church across the world, it is

¹⁹⁵ Orr, *A Good News Story* 16.

¹⁹⁶ Elaine Cameron, 'SEC Gender Audit' (May 2012) 3.1.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹⁸ Cameron, 'SEC Gender Audit' 7.1.

widely felt that any progress towards reform of gender inequality has stalled. In fact, the recent Vatican intervention in the United States to curb the Leadership Conference of Women Religious because of its feminist leanings, the removal of so called ‘dissenting’ bishops, and the censuring of many European priests and theologians for calling for open discussion of pastoral dilemmas are matters of concern for many Catholics. The dialogue and consultation advocated in the Anglosphere research seems to have been replaced with the silencing of those who, in good conscience, question or hold different opinions.

In secular society, questionnaires and surveys are used prolifically to assess consumer trends and customer satisfaction. The institutional Church may have been tardy in embracing new technology, such as social media, but this has now been rectified with Twitter accounts for bishops, including Pope Francis, promotion of Facebook pages, and internet websites for parishes and Catholic organisations. The Vatican website provides easy, and free, access to digital versions of most Magisterial documents and Pope Francis has urged the Church, particularly laity, to develop an online presence and use every means to ‘proclaim Christ in a digital age’.¹⁹⁹

The use of consultation and research that we have seen used to varying degrees of success in local Churches and in other Christian denominations has now become part of the Vatican mind-set regarding communication and dialogue. Pope Francis’ invitation to a worldwide consultation of laity and clergy on matters of family life, in preparation for the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of bishops on the Family in October 2014 was a welcome surprise. The Holy See, issued a questionnaire on questions of pastoral concern, which Archbishop Baldisseri, the Secretary General of the Synod of bishops, explained was to ensure ‘that input from local sources can be received regarding the themes and responses to the questionnaire’.

CBCEW immediately put the questionnaire online, and invited open participation, a format which many other bishops’ conferences, such as those in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland followed. The questionnaire was lengthy,

¹⁹⁹ Francis, ‘Address’ to the 6th Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Rome, December 07, 2013, *NEWS.VA* report, accessed August 01, 2014, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-use-internet-to-offer-real-reasons-fo>.

convoluted and theological, so some conferences rephrased the questions, but, even when it was left verbatim, many laity seized this unique opportunity to have their say, both as individuals and as groups. In the Anglosphere, for example in the US, Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR), a network of 15 lay groups, made the Vatican survey for the Synod available online to encourage wide participation. The total number of respondents they received was 16,582, 83 per cent of whom were laity, 53 per cent weekly Mass attendees.²⁰⁰

Some Bishops' conferences also published a digest of the responses to the questionnaire, which revealed a stark contrast between official Church teaching on matters of family life and the attitudes of the faithful.²⁰¹ Bishop Robert Lynch of Florida was one of the few US bishops who asked for grassroots feedback and who later reported on the responses he had received from 6,800 Catholics in his diocese with an eighteen-page summary of statistics on his blog.²⁰²

Another global survey of Catholics was published in 2014. It only included participants from one of the Anglosphere nations considered in this thesis, and its focus was on mainly contested issues relating to priesthood or morality. The *Voice of the People* survey conducted by Univision had 12,038 participants from twelve countries including the USA.²⁰³ The findings were unsurprising, with a continental drift evident, as the participants from the two African countries recorded opinions most in line with Church teaching. Participants from Europe and the USA delivered the most progressive opinions. Both this Univision project and the recent Vatican survey feature topics that affect the lives of Catholic women, and support the value of research and consultation so are relevant to mention here.

²⁰⁰ Peter J. Fagan, *Voices of the People*, accessed September 01, 2014, <http://popefrancis365.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Report-Voices-of-the-People-Submitted-021714--Spanish-edits.pdf>.

²⁰¹ For example, the German Bishops Conference, http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2014/2014-012b-ENG-Fragebogen-Die-patoralen-Herausforderungen-der-Familie.pdf.

²⁰² Jerry Filteau, 'Bishop: Synod questionnaire shows most reject teaching on contraceptives' (*National Catholic Reporter*, May 24, 2014), accessed June 01, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/bishop-synod-questionnaire-shows-most-reject-teaching-contraceptives>.

²⁰³ Univision, *Voice of the People Catholic Survey* (2014), <http://www.univision.com/interactivos/openpage/2014-02-06/la-voz-del-pueblo-matriz-1>.

In England and Wales in 1995, the bishops stated in a report that ‘the manner in which the Church lives its common life is part of the sign it gives to the world’.²⁰⁴ So the celebration of the golden jubilee of the Second Vatican Council has become the focus for many calls for reform from clergy and laity alike, all of which mention the need for increased participation of the laity in general, and women in particular. One example is the 2013 Spring Plenary Conference of the Catholic German bishops in Trier where they dedicated an entire day to a ‘Studententag zum Zusammenwirken von Frauen und Männern in der Kirche’, that is, to discussion about collaborative ministry and the promotion of roles for women in the Church.²⁰⁵ Christa Pongratz-Lippitt reported that Cardinal Karl Lehmann of Mainz said that ‘the time has come to make a good and binding decision’ about roles for women, while Cardinal Kasper stated that the Church had failed to utilise the full potential of women in the Church in the past.²⁰⁶ Another example is the Pontifical Council for Culture’s sponsorship of a meeting of cardinals and bishops in February 2014 with the theme ‘Women’s Cultures: Equality and Difference’.²⁰⁷

This evidence of ongoing discussion on women in the Church, and increased use of empirical research, would indicate that my own research is timely, and could be useful as a further tool to ground dialogue regarding any future positive development.

Summary

This chapter has examined the efforts made by Conferences of Bishops across the countries of the Anglosphere to implement the teaching of Vatican II. A clear awareness is shown of the importance of developing a greater collaboration between clergy and laity in the mission of the Church. The various research projects and consultations held on the participation of women in the Church are inspiring and encouraging, even if their results were not well publicised. They testify to the good work of the past, and show that a

²⁰⁴ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *The Sign We Give: Report from the Working Party on Collaborative Ministry* (Chelmsford: CBEW, 1995).

²⁰⁵ Robert Zollitsch, ‘Pressebericht des Vorsitzenden der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, anlässlich der Pressekonferenz zum Abschluss der Frühjahrs-Vollversammlung der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz’ (Trier: February 21, 2013) no.38, 3.

²⁰⁶ Christa Pongratz-Lippitt, ‘Top jobs promise to women’, *The Tablet*, March 02, 2013, 32.

²⁰⁷ Pontifical Council of Culture, ‘Women’s Cultures: Equality and Difference’, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.cultura.va/content/cultura/en/plenarie/2015-women.html>.

constructive dialogue is possible, even within current Church structures, if the will is there to develop this.

A key insight of all the research investigated was the realisation of the diversity among women. This indicates that for any future discussion about the participation of women to be fruitful, the Church must acknowledge there is no singular entity that is a Catholic woman.

The research highlighted many areas of common concern, namely sexism, gender inequality, exclusive language, the exercise of authority and power, and the need to care for those marginalised or oppressed. It also identified many needs: for ongoing formation; for compassion for the imperfect; for sensitivity to the realities of marriage and parenthood; for training in how to work collaboratively, for utilising the skills of all the people of God.

In contemporary Scotland are these still matters of interest and debate in the Catholic community? To discover the perception of the lay faithful here and now, a small-scale empirical survey was undertaken. Chapter Four will present and analyse its results.

CHAPTER 4: CONSULTING THE FAITHFUL -

Empirical Research Project on the participation of women in the Catholic Church conducted in 2013.

‘The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom and their tongues speak justice.’
(Ps 37:30)

Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the rationale, methodology, and findings of a micro empirical research survey on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, which I conducted in Scotland during 2013.

Rationale

Having discovered the breadth and quality of research from the Anglosphere nations, I was intrigued that the Catholic hierarchy in Scotland had undertaken no similar research on women in the Church.

At the suggestion of Dr Bob Dixon, one of the co-authors of the report *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* arising from the Australian research, I decided to use the methodology and the coding framework developed by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to conduct a micro version of their survey in Scotland in 2013.¹ This not only provided a sound academic and professional foundation for the 2013 empirical research, but it also generated an extra layer of analysis, enabling contrast and comparison between the earlier Australian results and the newer Scottish data.

Aims

The aim of the survey was to gather data on current opinion and praxis regarding the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Scotland, recording positive areas of participation, identifying any barriers, and eliciting suggestions as to how participation could be improved if necessary.

¹ MacDonald et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 438-449.

Methodology

Detailed study of empirical methods and theories suggested that no single method was inherently better than any other. I chose to follow Zina O’Leary’s recommendation that a researcher needed to consider the pros and cons of various methods, and to match these with the outcomes the research hoped to realise.² I deemed written submissions, interviews, and focus groups most useful in garnering qualitative evidence, and the use of questionnaires in providing quantitative data. Utilising several methods means that the results will be of greater depth and offer a wider perspective than would be possible with only a single methodology. Applying the coding framework developed by ACU to analysis of the qualitative data ensured that this methodology would be reliable, with the same techniques producing similar results when used again. It would also be valid, in that it would measure what it was designed to explore, in this case women’s participation in the Church.

For the 2013 empirical research in Scotland three elements from the Australian research were included:

- A survey questionnaire in paper and electronic form

This was based on the Australian Catholic Church Life Survey form but reduced in size, from fifty questions to nineteen, including seven background information questions. The adaptation removed questions relating to Aboriginal peoples, which are not relevant in the Scottish context, and doctrinal questions, on the basis that this survey was intended to focus specifically on parish involvement, i.e. lay participation. There was also a practical reason for this reduction in questions: in Australia with the backing of the Bishops’ Conference the questionnaires were completed during Sunday Mass, instead of the homily, but as this was not possible in Scotland the forms needed to be suitable for completion after Mass. A website was also set up where participants could complete forms online, and forms were emailed to a wide constituency.

- Written submissions

A wide range of networks and individuals were asked to circulate information, inviting submissions to the research project.

- Interviews

² Zina O’Leary, *The Essential Guide to Doing Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 2004), 150.

Meetings were set up with Focus Groups comprising Religious, lay workers, ecumenical participants, parish groups etc. Individuals, including bishops, priests, and women with significant experience were also interviewed.

Methods used by the Australian study but not employed were Public Hearings, which were not possible in the situation of a lone, independent researcher, and surveys of Catholic organizations, e.g. hospitals, which were not applicable to the Scottish situation.

I chose a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research methods based on Alan Bryman's proposal that there can be added strength in a combination of both these methods.³ This was also the format chosen for the Australian research, so it accorded with the intention to replicate the richness of their results, albeit on a much smaller scale. Appreciating the value of triangulation in research, I purposefully chose different methods and extended the original timescale for the data gathering to capture the opinions of as wide a variety of respondents as possible. The use of theological reflection combined with empirical research aims to deepen the study. The correlation of theory to practice is in line with Jeff Astley's assertion that such an integration of theory and praxis aids the recovery of theology as a fundamental dimension of every Christian's vocation.⁴ This recognises that theology is not abstract but rather the working out of precepts to be able to apply them to daily human existence, enriching the common good as well as contributing to personal fulfilment. As Hans-Georg Ziebertz has asserted the goal of this 'practical theology' is not only to develop theories about practice, but also to better develop those practices and make them more effective.⁵

Quantitative methods

Quantitative research is a common tool for gauging popular opinion or analysing behaviour or experiences. It seeks to ask people for their opinions in a structured way, so that the researcher can produce raw data, and determine statistics as a guide to a representative sample. To obtain reliable statistical

³ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (London: Routledge 1988), 128.

⁴ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary theology: Looking, Listening, and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 57-95.

⁵ Hans-Georg Ziebertz, 'Normativity and Empirical Research in Practical Theology', *Journal of Empirical Theology*, Volume 15, Number 1, BRILL (2002): 14.

results, it is important to survey people in large numbers and seek to obtain a representative sample of the target audience. This is why, in the 2013 research, both online survey tools and distribution of questionnaires at Sunday parish services were utilised. Using this approach, the data collected is not strictly representative, since it represents findings drawn from a diverse and wholly random body of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. However, I would argue that the data generated is representative in that it does reflect the wide diversity of opinion within Catholicism today, among laity and clergy.

As noted above, the framework of the *Woman and Man* questionnaire form provided the template for the questionnaire used here. To improve response rates, it was trialled first with a parish group, to ensure the language was clear and accessible, and that it did not take too long to complete. As the researcher, I explained the reason for the request for background personal information, and emphasised that all information given would be treated as confidential, which was an important factor for many participants. The form both asked people to tick boxes and allowed them to add comments, so that they can explain their choices or add insights they felt were important. An interface with the qualitative requirement of research, intended to generate data relating to participants' personal perspectives and interpretations was thus provided.

Qualitative methods

Five characteristics of interpretative research, as identified by Robert Sherman and Rodman Webb, provided the basis for the choice of approach utilised here.⁶ Firstly, the need to place events in context and to understand fully the environment within which the responses are generated is fulfilled by my personal and professional background and experience of the Church. The second and third characteristics relate to the need for the researcher to avoid presumptions or manipulation of data and to allow participants to speak for themselves without alteration, so that the research can accurately record their opinions. I record the exact statistics collected in this research project, and report verbatim the personal comments of participants. This ensures that the findings truly reflect the evidence, which, as Margot Ely puts it, makes it

⁶ Robert R. Sherman and Rodman B. Webb, *Qualitative Research In Education* (London: Routledge, 1988), 5-8.

possible to 'study the familiar without the blinders that familiarity often attaches to us'.⁷ Fourthly, the researcher has to consider the project holistically, analysing each response not in isolation, but in relation to every other submission. Here, the statistical analysis of the questionnaire responses is augmented by the individual clarifying statements and by data collected through other methods. Lastly, the requirement for the researcher to find the methods most pertinent for the project, understanding that there are various methods available, conforms to the combination of methods chosen here.

Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen would argue that any research is like a jigsaw puzzle without a box. Without a picture of the finished product as guide, the researcher only uncovers the true picture as you collect more pieces and fit them together.⁸ This gives an important transparency to the research. Although a conjecture of opinion was already possible, the random selection of respondents meant that there could be no prediction of the final results. Due to the very personal and diverse reality that is faith experience, I fully expected a wide variety of responses to the research questions. I understood that researchers need to be committed, as Bogdan & Biklen suggest, 'to examining contrary evidence', and to providing 'a clarification of values underpinning the research'.⁹ While aiming to ground any theory in the data, I also wanted to ensure that participants' voices were clearly articulated, in the 'thick description' that Norman Denzin has postulated as capable of casting new light on the subject of the research.¹⁰ The intention was to value the lived experience of all those who participated, in agreement with Sara Delamont's belief that, although qualitative research are more stressful and time-consuming for researchers than a straightforward questionnaire study, the deeper insights produced make them worth the personal commitment.¹¹

Interviews

⁷ Margot Ely, et al. *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles* (London: Falmer 1991), 17.

⁸ Robert C. Bogdan and S.K. Biklen, *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1992), 29.

⁹ Bogdan and Biklen, *Qualitative research for education* 29.

¹⁰ Norman Denzin, *Interpretive Interactionism* (London: Sage, 1989), 83.

¹¹ Sara Delamont, *Fieldwork in Educational Settings: Methods, Pitfalls and Perspectives* (London: Falmer 1992), viii.

The interviews were semi-structured: they used pre-set questions but provided scope for open-ended answers. All participants were asked the same four questions used in the Australian research:

1. The areas of engagement women currently had with the local Church;
2. The support towards participation they were receiving;
3. The barriers to participation they may be encountering;
4. The ways in which women's participation in the local Church could be developed.

Both synchronous (face-to-face) and asynchronous (by email response) interviews were undertaken. I found this to be the richest method of data collection: it revealed the lived experiences and personal views of participants, as people opened up to personal contact and active listening from me as the researcher.

Focus groups

Focus groups were convened to facilitate response from key groups, e.g. Religious sisters, parish groups etc. Although group work may inhibit some people from expressing their opinions freely, it also encourages debate and responsive insights from others involved, and this can be very productive. Focus group members completed questionnaires and then participated in the group discussions on the four key research questions, which yielded additional and deeper insights. Indeed, several members of these groups expressed their gratitude for being able to hear the experiences of others.

Participants

Since I did not choose respondents, there was neither a hidden agenda nor solicitation of views that would coincide with my own. A general invitation to participate in the survey was sent to every organisation listed in the Catholic Directories, including *Union of Catholic Mothers*, *We are Church*, *Opus Dei*, *Justice & Peace* etc. Regardless of their personal leanings (conservative or liberal, progressive or traditional) anyone was free to submit their comments to the research questions, and many from these organisations did so via the research website. To reach clergy and parishioners, bishops' *Ad clerum* letters or diocesan mailings were utilised to circulate invitations to participate, ensuring that there was no partiality in the involvement of parishes.

The empirical research was reactive rather than circumscribed. The initial plan to survey parishioners in key parishes in the dioceses of Aberdeen and Glasgow, and to combine this with interviews and written submissions from individuals across Scotland, ended up being much broader. At the time of data collection, four of the eight Diocesan Sees in Scotland were vacant so an approach was made to bishops in England and Wales too. The website attracted responses from a wide variety of participants in the UK and elsewhere, including non-Catholics. However, these contributions were valuable and interesting and this seemed to me a positive development. The presentation of the data below, however, concentrates on those respondents who identified as Scottish Catholics.

Obstacles to the research came from the inevitable delay in canvassing busy people despite their interest in the subject and desire to participate. Extending the timescale would have resulted in a greater number of responses but this was not possible due to constraints on my own time. Nonetheless, the quality of the responses collected evidences the widespread interest in the subject under discussion: the participation of women in the Church.

Data

All data has been stored electronically and kept anonymous. In the report of the findings that follows all participants will be referred to by their respondent number with only such personal details as are relevant to the analysis. Although my original plan was to use towns as an identifying factor, to ensure greater anonymity I have changed this category to dioceses for Scottish participants, and to countries for those outside of Scotland.

After advice and the completion of a training course on SPSS analytical software, I decided to use this tool for analysing the data collected via the questionnaires, while the written submissions were analysed using the coding framework developed by ACU, listed in Appendix three.

Charts of the statistical information are included in an appendix, in addition to the tables of figures, appreciating the need to assist the variety of individual learning styles by providing visual illustration as well as text and numerical

analysis. Quotations from participants are included in in these findings in order to reinforce the evidence. These are italicised to clearly identify them in the text.

2013 Participation of Women Survey Findings

Five hundred and sixty three individuals responded to the empirical research. Five hundred and ten completed questionnaires were received, plus fifty-three written submissions from different individuals, including the twelve interviewees. There were no incomplete or spoiled papers to consider.

Participants came from many sources: from four parishes in Aberdeen diocese; four parishes in Glasgow archdiocese; two Catholic secondary schools with pupils from wide catchment areas; seven focus groups, (of which one was ecumenical, and one was composed of Religious); and interviews with twelve key individuals. In what follows, an analysis of the quantitative data will first be offered; the qualitative data will then be considered. Finally, results will be compared.

Firstly, it is important to set the scene by considering the background information of all the respondents. Of the total participants, 92 live outside Scotland, but it should be noted that all are either Scots living elsewhere or people familiar with the Church in Scotland. 465 participants identified as Catholic while 98 participants, although not Catholic, had a knowledge and understanding of the Church through their work, study, or ecumenical ministry. Therefore, although detailed analysis of the questionnaire results will focus on the Catholic participants living in Scotland, the value of the contributions from all the participants is recognised in the overall summary we first consider.

1. Gender

Across all the participants 70 per cent (394) were female, and 30 per cent (169) were male, a ratio similar to the usual gender distribution in parish life in Britain.¹²

¹² See Tearfund Report (2013) stating UK churches are made up of 65 per cent women in *Telegraph* article, accessed February 01, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.women/womens-life/10035155/Why-do-more-women-flock-to-the-Church.html>.

This research is fully inclusive, inviting both male and female participants, and although the participation of women is the focus, the findings will have relevance also for laymen. Gayle Letherby states that ‘gender is a difference that makes a difference’, so it may be important to record the gender breakdown to responses in some instances.¹³ In some of the earlier research projects on the participation of women that were analysed in chapter three, a key weakness identified was the lack of consultation with men, lay or ordained. This resulted in the challenge of bias to the findings of these surveys, which undermined their validity. By including men in this survey, I am able to offer comparative data for women and men.

2. Year of birth

There was a wide age profile of respondents, with years of birth stretching from 1925 to 1997.

Year of birth	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
1925-1930	18	3.1%
1931-1940	67	11.9%
1941-1950	114	20.2%
1951-1960	95	16.8%
1961-1970	57	10.1%
1971-1980	24	4.3%
1981-1990	29	5.2%
1991-1997	159	28.4%
Total	563	100%

Table 1 Age profile of respondents

A deliberate slant of this research was to solicit the opinions of young people, therefore as well as inviting young people in parishes, several Catholic schools were approached to invite sixth year pupils to participate in the survey. One hundred and fifty two pupils responded, 29.8 per cent of the total respondents to the questionnaires. This substantial number has had an impact on the findings taken as a whole. After the overall analysis, a further step will be to

¹³ Gayle Letherby, *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice* (Bucks: Open University Press, 2003), 135.

will divide the questionnaire responses to show clear differences of opinion between these young people and the adult respondents.

3. State of Life

The age profile also has an impact on the statistical breakdown for the state of life of respondents, as all 152 of the sixth year pupils were lay and single.

The two largest groupings of respondents were single and married people: other significant groups were religious, clergy, and widows. Among the respondents were also clergy from other Christian traditions and Catholic permanent Deacons, hence the category of married and ordained, as distinct from the category for clergy: celibate priests and bishops.

State of life	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Single	204	36.2%
Married	198	35.2%
Married & ordained	5	0.9%
Widowed	46	8.2%
Divorced	18	3.2%
Divorced & in new relationship	1	0.2%
Separated	4	0.7%
Separated & in new relationship	1	0.2%
Living with a partner	13	2.3%
Religious	41	7.2%
Clergy	32	5.7%
Total	563	100%

Table 2 State of life of respondents

4. Diocese/town

Due my own time constraints, only eight parishes were directly approached with the questionnaire in the dioceses of Glasgow and Aberdeen. However, responses were received from across all the eight Scottish dioceses as well as from further afield. As will be shown, the remarkable similarity between responses indicates that common concerns transcend geographical boundaries. This validates the

later comparison of these findings with the earlier research in Anglosphere countries.

Place of residence	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Aberdeen	53	9.4%
Argyll & the Isles	2	0.4%
Dunkeld	6	1.1%
St Andrew's & Edinburgh	14	2.5%
Galloway	8	1.4%
Glasgow	361	64.1%
Motherwell	10	1.8%
Paisley	17	3.0%
England & Wales	80	14.2%
Other Anglosphere nations	6	1.06%
Europe	6	1.06%
Total	563	100%

Table 3 Place of residence

5. Religion

Despite the large number of younger participants, the majority of respondents identified themselves as Catholic and Mass attenders. It is from among the sixth year pupils that the majority of those identifying as no faith, and all of those from other faiths, come. This reflects the changing demographics of Catholic schools in Scotland where a growing minority of pupils is drawn from other faith backgrounds, particularly Islam.

Religion	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Catholic & Mass attender	422	75.0%
Catholic non-Mass attender	43	7.6%
Other Christian	37	6.6%
Other faith	39	6.9%
No faith	22	3.9%
Total	563	100%

Table 4 Religion of respondents

6. Education

The question asked respondents to indicate the highest level of education undertaken. Because of the presence of the sixth year pupils the highest percentage - 44 per cent - of respondents fall within the category 'high school'. Of note is the fact that 23.8 per cent of participants were educated to post graduate level.

Education	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
High school	248	44.0%
College	65	11.5%
1st Degree	93	16.5%
Post graduate	134	23.8%
Doctorate	23	4.1%
Total	563	100%

Table 5 Education – highest level attained

7. Occupation

This survey can be valued for the diversity of its respondents, with occupations so variegated that these are consolidated into broader categories. The data reflects the random nature of the responses. The largest categories are students, due to the sixth year pupils, and the retired, of whom a quarter self identified as retired teachers. This is noteworthy as it reflects the historical emphasis in Scottish Catholic schools of encouraging pupils to go into teaching, and the sense of lay vocation that underpinned this career choice. It also highlights the debt of gratitude owed to retired teachers by the Church, as the findings evidence their significant contribution to parish life.

Occupation	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Accountancy	4	0.7%
Administration	20	3.6%
Archivist	2	0.4%
Bishop	9	1.6%
Candidate for Ministry	1	0.2%
Carer	1	0.2%

Chaplain	4	0.7%
Chef	1	0.2%
Church worker	7	1.2%
Civil servant	4	0.7%
Consultant	6	1.1%
Counsellor	2	0.4%
Doctor	4	0.7%
Editor	1	0.2%
Episcopalian priest	3	0.5%
Hairdresser	1	0.2%
Housewife	12	2.1%
IT	2	0.4%
Lecturer	7	1.2%
Librarian	2	0.4%
Manager	21	3.7%
Minister (Church of Scotland)	3	0.5%
Monk	7	1.2%
Museum curator	1	0.2%
Nurse	4	0.7%
Nursery nurse	1	0.2%
Patent attorney	1	0.2%
Permanent Deacon	3	0.5%
Podiatrist	1	0.2%
Priest	23	4.1%
Psychologist	2	0.4%
Religious	7	1.2%
Researcher	3	0.5%
Retired	120	21.3%
Retired teacher	45	8.0%
Sales assistant	7	1.2%
Scientist	1	0.2%
Self employed	2	0.4%
Social worker	3	0.5%
Solicitor	3	0.5%
Spiritual director	1	0.2%
Student	161	28.6%
Support worker	5	0.9%
Teacher	28	5.0%
Teaching assistant	3	0.5%
Tradesman	6	1.1%
Trainer	4	0.7%

Translator	1	0.2%
Waitress	1	0.2%
Writer	2	0.4%
Total	563	100%

Table 6 Occupation of respondents

Analysis of Questionnaire responses

A copy of the questionnaire form is in Appendix 1. The format is a double-sided multiple-choice form with twelve questions and a section to record seven background personal details. There was also space for respondents to add comments. Each respondent was allocated a number in the research database and any reference to quotations from individuals relates to this distinctive number to ensure anonymity. Of the total respondents to the questionnaire, 375 were female and 135 were male, 358 adults and 152 young people.

Scottish Catholic participants

There were 349 Catholic respondents living in Scotland and the following analysis relates to their questionnaires. 88 per cent of these identified as regular Mass attenders but additional comments made by the remaining 12 per cent indicate there is still a strong sense of faith despite some sense of alienation from the institution. Of this sample, 71.1 per cent were female and 28.9 per cent male.

Question 1 - Do you feel a strong sense of belonging to your parish? YES/NO (If Yes - why? If No - why not?)

252 respondents (72.2 per cent) indicated that they felt a sense of belonging. Expressions of this included:

*'Welcoming.'*¹⁴

*'Feeling of community.'*¹⁵

*'Sense of belonging.'*¹⁶

*'Lived all my life here.'*¹⁷

¹⁴ Respondent 238.

¹⁵ Respondent 190.

¹⁶ Respondent 76.

¹⁷ Respondent 307.

97 respondents (27.8 per cent) indicated that they did not feel a sense of belonging to their parish giving reasons such as:

*'Never been made very welcome.'*¹⁸

*'The parish seems lifeless.'*¹⁹

*'Clergy do not encourage involvement.'*²⁰

Several respondents indicated that they did not feel they belonged because of their personal situations: *'they don't accept who I am.'*²¹

Many of those who answered in the negative admitted that they do not attend services regularly, hence part of their lack of belonging could be because of this absence: however, their decision not to attend could also reflect a sense of not having been welcomed or valued.

There were also those who identified with the universal rather than the local Church:

*'I feel a strong sense of belonging to the Church rather than a specific parish.'*²²

and some who were itinerant:

*'I change what parish I go to depending on the times of Mass.'*²³

*'I have refuged to a nearby parish where the standard of preaching is much higher.'*²⁴

Question 2 - Are you actively involved in your parish? YES/NO

(If Yes - how? If No - why not?)

217 respondents (62.2 per cent) indicated that they were actively involved in their parishes; 132 respondents (37.8 per cent) were not actively involved.

Reasons for non-involvement included: *'family commitments'*²⁵ and *'don't have time'*.²⁶

¹⁸ Respondent 43.

¹⁹ Respondent 251.

²⁰ Respondent 272.

²¹ Respondent 361.

²² Respondent 214.

²³ Respondent 493.

²⁴ Respondent 437.

Many young people cited the pressures of academic work:

*'I have to focus on my studies which are more important at this time.'*²⁷

Of those who were involved, many were highly committed in a variety of ways, including both ecclesial ministries and forms of parish service:

*'Reader, Eucharistic minister, catechist, helping with flowers etc.'*²⁸

*'Reader, Eucharistic minister, Parish Pastoral Council, fundraiser, St Vincent De Paul society, hospital visitor.'*²⁹

Given that it was quite common for respondents to be involved in a multiplicity of ministries and areas of parish work, the question arises as to why this should be so. Are a few people doing everything while others are excluded e.g. by parish 'cliques'?

*'I would like to get involved as I am a Eucharistic minister at school and in the choir.'*³⁰

Or has this evolved because all the tasks are left to the faithful volunteers, because others do not feel they have the time or the talent or are committed elsewhere?

*'I don't feel as if I can bring anything into it.'*³¹

*'I work as a religious educator hence the primary focus of my liturgical life tends to revolve more around the school and its parish.'*³²

Question 3 - Have you ever taken up education/training offered by/for the Church? NO/YES

(If Yes - what kind - please circle any that apply)

1. Catechesis
2. Adult education
3. Studies in theology
4. Safeguarding training
5. Training for ministry - reader/Eucharistic minister/chaplaincy/youth work/music ministry
6. Independent self-funded theological study

²⁵ Respondent 318.

²⁶ Respondent 349.

²⁷ Respondent 453.

²⁸ Respondent 268.

²⁹ Respondent 243.

³⁰ Respondent 474.

³¹ Respondent 475.

³² Respondent 428.

178 respondents (51 per cent) had not undertaken any Church training or education. 171 respondents (49 per cent) had undertaken training, a good proportion of whom had received training for more than one ministry. There was a slight difference between genders with 52 per cent of females and 41 per cent of males having received training.

62.2 per cent of respondents were active in their parishes, yet only 49 per cent said they had taken part in training, indicating that some people had not received training for the parish ministry they were undertaking. However, some respondents who had received training also indicated that they were not active in parishes, and were therefore not utilising the training they had received in a parish context.

Questions needing further exploration are: the high number of young people who have never accessed training, even catechesis, and the low percentage of people who have had faith formation as adults.

Church Training	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Catechesis	60	17.2%
Adult education	51	14.6%
Studies in theology	49	14%
Safeguarding training	64	18.3%
Training for ministry - reader/ Eucharistic minister/chaplaincy/ youth work/music ministry	102	29.2%
Independent self-funded theological study	27	7.4%

Table 7 Response to question 3

Question 4 - Do you think that laymen and women are equally given opportunities to participate in Church life? YES/NO/Don't Know?
(If Yes - why? If No - why not?)

218 respondents (62.5 per cent) answered yes, while 103 respondents (29.5 per cent) answered no. This is the first question that also had the choice of a 'don't know' response, which 28 people (8 per cent) chose.

At first sight this seems a positive affirmation for current Church praxis. This observation must be qualified, however, in the light of some of the comments added as explanation. These clearly indicate a reading of the question as asking whether there *should* be there be equal opportunities rather than whether these actually are available. For example:

*'Because people don't get penalised because of their gender.'*³³

*'Because it is only right and just to give them the same opportunities.'*³⁴

*'Roles are sometimes perceived as gender based but volunteers are volunteers.'*³⁵

There are also the qualifying statements that indicate awareness of a diversity of practice:

*'In our parish yes.'*³⁶

*'Yes in our parish - but it has not been my experience in other parishes as much depends on the PP [Parish Priest] and his beliefs/attitudes about women's role in the church.'*³⁷

Among those who answered in the negative, clericalism appears as an issue:

*'Ordination denied; culture disempowers.'*³⁸

*'The ordained are in charge.'*³⁹

*'Ordained ministry is restricted to men and this understanding of "authority" permeates.'*⁴⁰

Even within the respondents who answered in the affirmative, there is frequently qualification:

*'Women are more willing to volunteer, men seem to be resistant - women do most of the menial work.'*⁴¹

³³ Respondent 361.

³⁴ Respondent 346.

³⁵ Respondent 177.

³⁶ Respondent 213.

³⁷ Respondent 252.

³⁸ Respondent 96.

³⁹ Respondent 438.

⁴⁰ Respondent 10.

⁴¹ Respondent 236.

However, a male respondent added: *'women outnumber men by 3/4 to 1 at least, so they run pretty well everything.'*⁴²

There is also comment that positive assessment of women's involvement could merely reflect the statistical make-up of parishes:

*'Because there are more women in the congregation.'*⁴³

*'I am sure if a layman was available he would be first choice - especially on the altar.'*⁴⁴

*'We can as women only go so far in the ministry of the church. Men can become deacons but women who have the same commitment to the parish have to be content with helping in other areas such as catechesis.'*⁴⁵

Some commented on the need to encourage involvement from laymen: *'because men are inclined to take a back seat.'*⁴⁶

*'I would like to see all lay people getting more opportunities - but men can aspire to roles not open to women e.g. deacon.'*⁴⁷

*'For laity there is a glass ceiling full stop.'*⁴⁸

Question 5 - Have you - or anyone you personally know - ever felt excluded from participation in the Church? NO/YES - (if Yes - please circle any that apply)

1. Myself
2. A female friend/family member/other person
3. A male friend/family member/other person

227 people (65 per cent) said that they had never known anyone who felt excluded from participation in the Church, while 122 people (35 per cent) answered yes. The additional comments reflected concern that the Christian community should be the cause of hurt or devaluation of any person, and among the young people it was often a parent who was cited as excluded from the Church

⁴² Respondent 110.

⁴³ Respondent 201.

⁴⁴ Respondent 279.

⁴⁵ Respondent 79.

⁴⁶ Respondent 69.

⁴⁷ Respondent 246.

⁴⁸ Respondent 114.

*'A friend did not feel excluded in this parish but felt alienated from institutional church because she was made to feel bad about being divorced.'*⁴⁹

*'I don't feel comfortable there as they don't accept who I am.'*⁵⁰

Of these responses, where several people also indicated more than one category or person, the statistics were:

Person	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Myself	50	14.3%
A female friend/family member/other person	70	22.3%
A male friend/family member/other person	38	10.9%

Table 8 Response to question 5

Question 6 - Some say there are barriers to lay participation in the Church - have you - or anyone you know - experienced any of these? NO /YES (Please circle any that apply)

1. Opposition or lack of support from clergy?
2. Opposition or lack of support from laymen?
3. Opposition or lack of support from laywomen?
4. Opposition or lack of support from older people?
5. Barriers caused by institutional structures in the Church?
6. Other - please describe -

200 respondents (57.3 per cent) said that they had not experienced any barriers to lay participation. 132 respondents (37.8 per cent) that they had; and 17 people (4.9 per cent) were unsure.

*'Historically clergy were unsupportive - not now.'*⁵¹

*'Hard to distinguish opposition from simple diversity of views.'*⁵²

Results here are distorted by the responses from the sixth year pupils, who admitted that they had little experience or knowledge of Church activities,

⁴⁹ Respondent 147.

⁵⁰ Respondent 364.

⁵¹ Respondent 306.

⁵² Respondent 96.

though would agree that there are *‘those who wish to maintain the status quo’*⁵³ and places where *‘young people are not made to feel welcome.’*⁵⁴

Lack of support from clergy and barriers caused by institutional Church structures were the most common causes identified, although laity could also be sources of opposition:

*‘Depends on the PP [Parish Priest] and the parish/diocesan structures in place.’*⁵⁵

*‘There are in some places, at some times and from some people, barriers erected, active and passive.’*⁵⁶

*‘Some lay people don’t like another lay person conducting a retreat, prayer group etc.’*⁵⁷

*‘My own research has show opposition from voluntary lay structures - although this could be stemming from top-down so could be coming from the clergy.’*⁵⁸

*‘Some religious sisters think they should be doing all the church activities - some priests want to do it all themselves.’*⁵⁹

Barrier	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Opposition or lack of support from clergy	85	24.4%
Opposition or lack of support from laymen	33	9.5%
Opposition or lack of support from laywomen	35	10%
Opposition or lack of support from older people	29	8.3%
Barriers caused by institutional structures in the Church	81	23.2%
Other - please describe	21	6%

Table 9 Response to question 6

⁵³ Respondent 41.

⁵⁴ Respondent 431.

⁵⁵ Respondent 194.

⁵⁶ Respondent 114.

⁵⁷ Respondent 228.

⁵⁸ Respondent 172.

⁵⁹ Respondent 316.

Apathy from both clergy and laity was also acknowledged as a barrier:

*'There is a lot of inertia also among lay people who are too used to waiting to be told, or for someone else to take the lead.'*⁶⁰

Question 7 - In your opinion, what support do laymen and women currently receive to enable them to participate in Church life? (Please circle all that apply)

1. Opportunities to take part in theological education
2. Financial assistance to undertake study or training - e.g. bursaries/grants
3. Job opportunities in church work
4. Volunteer opportunities for the Church
5. Formal/informal support from clergy
6. Formal/informal support from other lay people
7. Other forms of support
8. Little current support
9. No current support

263 people (75.4 per cent) knew of opportunities to do voluntary work with the Church while 93 (26.6 per cent) knew of paid opportunities. 153 people (43.8 per cent) knew of opportunities available for laity to study theology. 176 people recognised support from the clergy while only 124 cited support from laity.

*'I have always felt supported although in some cases left to get on with it.'*⁶¹

Only 39 people thought there was either little or no support, although as in question 6, younger respondents added that they had poor understanding of what was on offer.

In the 'other' category of support, mention was made of support from Religious orders, from Catholic organisations, and from family and friends.

Among those who answered that there were opportunities available for laity to study theology, were some respondents who added that they only knew this because of my research survey, i.e. that I was a laywoman studying theology.

⁶⁰ Respondent 11.

⁶¹ Respondent 102.

Other clarifications were that support varied across parishes and dioceses:

*'Have met/heard of these at some points but not regularly.'*⁶²

*'Clergy support only sometimes!'*⁶³

*'Limited financial resources to fund these kinds of support.'*⁶⁴

*'These are at all "at best".'*⁶⁵

Support	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Opportunities to take part in theological education	153	43.8%
Financial assistance to undertake study or training	41	11.7%
Job opportunities in Church work	93	26.6%
Volunteer opportunities for the Church	263	75.4%
Formal/informal support from clergy	176	50.4%
Formal/informal support from other laity	124	35.5%
Other forms of support	91	26.1%
Little current support	29	8.3%
No current support	10	1.9%

Table 10 Response to question 7

Question 8 - Do you think using inclusive language would be helpful in promoting the equality of men and women? Yes/ No / Don't know
(If Yes - why? If No - why not?)

This question prompted the highest number of 'don't know' responses, 154 (44.1 per cent). 48 (13.8 per cent) gave a negative response although many clarified this with comments such as:

*'Just window dressing, doesn't tackle the real issues.'*⁶⁶

⁶² Respondent 113.

⁶³ Respondent 173.

⁶⁴ Respondent 285.

⁶⁵ Respondent 110.

*'Inclusive language means nothing - change Church teaching.'*⁶⁷

*'I hate language being changed when it changes the meaning - inclusive language is ok when meaning is not changed - inclusive action more important than language.'*⁶⁸

Others were very much against inclusive language:

*I don't think manipulation of language serves any good purpose: equality should be promoted in other ways.'*⁶⁹

*'I find the suggestion patronising in the extreme. I am comfortable with who I am.'*⁷⁰

A young person said: *'tradition is something you just don't mess with.'*⁷¹

Among the 147 (42.1 per cent) positive responses, comments included:

*'The very fact that we are all created in the image of Christ - this should be reflected in the language we use.'*⁷²

*'It would cause a paradigm shift in people's thinking - jolt them into inclusiveness in other ways.'*⁷³

*'Consciously or unconsciously the use of exclusive language reinforces the sense that men have priority and prominence within the Church, and the world.'*⁷⁴

However, some of the respondents who answered 'no' or 'don't know' later chose gender inclusive language as a way to increase the participation of women in Question 11.

Question 9 - What do you think might help laity participate more in Church life? (Please circle all that apply)

1. Education for laity about their roles/responsibilities as members of the church
2. Practical training/formation for laity

⁶⁶ Respondent 25.

⁶⁷ Respondent 439.

⁶⁸ Respondent 144.

⁶⁹ Respondent 105.

⁷⁰ Respondent 78.

⁷¹ Respondent 455.

⁷² Respondent 137.

⁷³ Respondent 169.

⁷⁴ Respondent 33.

3. Education for clergy about the roles/responsibilities of the laity in the church
4. Opportunities for laity to use their theological qualifications
5. Opportunities for laity to use their professional qualifications/work experience
6. Opportunities for laity to use their life experience - e.g. in pastoral ministry
7. More paid job opportunities
8. Other - please describe

The highest proportion (61.3 per cent) thought education for laity about their apostolate was needed. 53.6 per cent cited opportunity for laity to use their theological qualifications while almost 50 per cent rated practical formation and the chance to use professional qualifications as useful.

Paid employment within the Church was only an issue for the younger respondents. Education, and the opportunity to use their skills and experience, was more important for the adult respondents.

*'All of the above are important. An essential; starting point, however, has to be about good leadership from a well trained clergy with a clear sense of purpose and vision, in terms of the participation of lay people.'*⁷⁵

*'Many parishes are staffed with clergy who may either be older or faced with an overwhelming workload. By using model adopted in the US where liturgists etc. are paid, a burden could be lifted.'*⁷⁶

*'I actually think that communication is one of the biggest challenges - How do you share enough information with the right people, notice boards and bulletins are not really communicating - people don't always see stuff.'*⁷⁷

Help	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Education for laity about their roles/responsibilities as members of the Church	214	61.3%

⁷⁵ Respondent 256.

⁷⁶ Respondent 428.

⁷⁷ Respondent 505.

Practical training/formation for laity	170	48.7%
Education for clergy about the roles/responsibilities of the laity in the Church	173	49.6%
Opportunities for laity to use their theological qualifications	187	53.6%
Opportunities for laity to use their professional qualifications/work experience	174	49.9%
Opportunities for laity to use their life experience - e.g. in pastoral ministry	96	27.5%
More paid job opportunities	63	18.1%
Other	39	11.1%
Don't know what might help	25	7.1%

Table 11 Response to question 9

Question 10 - Some say there are specific barriers to the participation of women in the Church - have you - or women you know - experienced any of these? NO/YES - (Please circle all that apply)

1. Opposition or lack of support from clergy
2. Opposition or lack of support from laymen
3. Opposition or lack of support from laywomen
4. Preference given to men
5. Barriers caused by institutional structures in the Church
6. Other - please describe -

158 people thought there were specific barriers for women but equally 176 people thought not and 15 people did not know.

There was no marked difference in the responses of men or women to this question although older respondents did point out recent improvements:

*'30/40 years ago certain priests did put up barriers but this has changed greatly and priests are welcoming and encourage participation.'*⁷⁸

*'Because of historical position of men as leaders and women as disenfranchised there may be a preference given to men.'*⁷⁹

Among the 'other' barriers mention was made of:

*'Yes, there are barriers; some are cultural, and will presumably disappear or change, others would not seem amenable to change -e.g. bishops, priests, and there are undoubtedly "gender stereotypes" in the minds both of women and men, which result in barriers. Which of these barriers will disappear, when and how, I do not think is foreseeable. Open-ness to the Holy Spirit is needed, and mutual respect.'*⁸⁰

*'Disparaging attitude.'*⁸¹

*'Only male deacons means further barriers.'*⁸²

*'Asked to join SVDP [St Vincent de Paul society] in another parish and was told no women.'*⁸³

The findings clearly suggest a sense that laywomen and men also hinder the participation of women; therefore, these barriers are not constituted merely by clerical opposition or formal structures.

Barriers to women	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Opposition or lack of support from clergy	86	24.6%
Opposition or lack of support from laymen	36	10.3%
Opposition or lack of support from laywomen	36	10.3%
Preference given to men	99	28.4%
Barriers caused by institutional structures in the Church	102	29.2%
Other	24	6.9%

Table 12 Response to question 10

⁷⁸ Respondent 242.

⁷⁹ Respondent 147.

⁸⁰ Respondent 114.

⁸¹ Respondent 119.

⁸² Respondent 194.

⁸³ Respondent 184.

Question 11 - What do you think would be the most effective ways to increase the participation of women in the Church? (Please circle all that apply)

1. Prayer
2. Use of gender inclusive language in liturgy
3. Providing opportunities for increasing women's involvement in decision making
4. Reforming practices that do not promote equality
5. Training in collaborative ministry for clergy
6. Training in collaborative ministry for laity
7. Establishing a Women's Commission as a consultative body to the bishops Conference
8. Other - please describe

The most popular response (64.8 per cent) advocated opening up opportunities for women to be involved in decision making. The level of involvement mentioned covered the full spectrum from the parish to the Vatican. While it was acknowledged that women already participate in decision-making in parish pastoral councils, comment was made that they rarely chaired these committees. While a Women's Commission was not widely popular, an effective Vatican Office for the laity, staffed and led by laity was proposed:

*'A more active and prominent Laity Commission would help the Church to benefit from the gifts of all the people of God.'*⁸⁴

There were calls for ordination of women to the priesthood and diaconate and a possible role as clergy wives:

*'Shoot me, but I think priests should be allowed to marry. There is no obvious female leadership in the parish, which creates a vacuum - this is filled by an assorted group of women who don't always pull in the same direction. If the Church really values us, then show us by accepting the feminine contribution that a woman makes to every level of society. Firstly and surely most intrinsically, as wives and mothers!'*⁸⁵

Suggestions for development were clear that these should foster integration at every level that was appropriate because of skills and aptitude rather than gender.

⁸⁴ Respondent 217.

⁸⁵ Respondent 505.

Two points should be highlighted, which will be compared later to data from other sources:

- 217 respondents (62.2 per cent) did not think a National Women's Commission would be helpful.
- In every category, except for increasing women's involvement in decision-making, a majority of respondents were unsure that any development of women's participation would be achieved by these means.

*'All of these would help - but would probably not be very effective.'*⁸⁶

Ways to increase participation of women	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Prayer	141	40.4%
Use of gender inclusive language in liturgy	138	39.5%
Providing opportunities for increasing women's involvement in decision making	226	64.8%
Reforming practices that do not promote equality	147	42.1%
Training in collaborative ministry for clergy	129	37%
Training in collaborative ministry for laity	120	34.4%
Establishing a Women's Commission as a consultative body to the bishops Conference	132	37.8%
Other	62	17.8%
Don't know what would be effective	26	7.4%

Table 13 Response to question 11.

Question 12 -Pope Benedict recently said that '*the laity in the Church should be considered not as "collaborators" with the clergy, but as persons truly "co-responsible" for the being and activity of the Church*'. How can laity exercise this co-responsibility? (Please circle all that apply)

⁸⁶ Respondent 285.

1. Prayer
2. Attendance at Sunday Mass
3. Joining parish groups
4. Helping to administer parish/care for church building
5. Involvement in Pastoral ministries
6. Involvement in Liturgical ministries
7. Involvement in Chaplaincy teams
8. Involvement in theological education/catechesis
9. Other - please describe

The responses to this question are very different from all the earlier answers with only 20 people unsure of response.

The high percentage that advocated participation in Mass on Sundays is interesting, because this is lower than the percentage who said they attended Mass regularly, and includes some of the respondents who had stated that they did not attend Mass.

Some of the additional comments made suggest that the high percentage choosing prayer, attending Mass, and joining parish groups, reflect a reading of the question that focused on Pope Benedict i.e. where would the Pope think laity should be involved.

A few older participants could not envisage change despite rating the suggestions positively:

*'They can do all of these but I find them a bit inward looking and would prefer us to think of what the mission of the Church is and focus on its place in society and the world.'*⁸⁷

*'Parishes today are struggling to meet their day-to-day needs - everyone is struggling in today's financial squeeze - so adding to the costs of the church is just an impossible dream.'*⁸⁸

In the 'other' category, suggestions were varied:

*'And by encouraging priests - who are our direct leaders at parish level - to open up debate and dialogue with their parishioners about what they want.'*⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Respondent 507.

⁸⁸ Respondent 285.

⁸⁹ Respondent 505.

*'Involvement with education of seminarians and in diocesan structures.'*⁹⁰

Method of involvement	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Prayer	231	66.2%
Attendance at Sunday Mass	260	74.5%
Joining parish groups	253	72.5%
Helping to administer parish/care for Church building	204	58.5%
Involvement in Pastoral ministries	215	61.6%
Involvement in Liturgical ministries	198	56.7%
Involvement in Chaplaincy teams	176	50.4%
Involvement in theological education/catechesis	187	53.6%
Other	57	16.3%
Don't know how co-responsibility could be exercised	20	5.7%

Table 14 Response to question 12.

Analysis of generational differences

The involvement of young people in the survey was vital, not only for the insights they could offer, but also to affirm their value to the Church as the prophet Joel said 'your old will dream dreams; your young will see visions'.⁹¹

Two thirds of the respondents were adults, and one third were young people. In some cases, answers were similar across the generations but in others there were marked differences, which will be highlighted here.

In the first two questions asking about belonging to, or being involved in a parish, a large majority of adult respondents felt a sense of belonging, i.e. 212 (82.8 per cent), whereas the majority of the school pupils (57 per cent) answered in the negative. Even more markedly, 66 per cent of sixth-years responded that they were not involved in a parish, whereas 73.8 per cent of

⁹⁰ Respondent 328.

⁹¹ Joel 2:28.

adults responded that they were involved. This is no surprise, since the dearth of young people in our parishes is well documented.⁹² The young people added comments, which overwhelmingly repeat the same phrases ‘welcome’, ‘care’, and ‘strong sense of community’ as to why they feel they belong. This is replicated by the commonality of language in the negative responses, such as ‘don’t know people’, ‘not made welcome’, ‘personal issues’.

This highlights the urgent need for the Church not only to invite, but actively to seek engagement with young people, as many respondents here clearly indicate their interest in becoming more involved. Without young people, the ‘body of Christ’ is deficient: St Paul assures us that just as with the human body, the Church needs all its ‘parts’ to function and to flourish.⁹³

Only 30 per cent of the young people had undertaken any training or faith formation, compared to 55 per cent of adults. However, this evidences that some formation is offered to young people in both parishes and Catholic schools. More negatively, however, this indicates wasted opportunity, as 100 per cent of these bright and articulate young adults clearly reveal in their responses to the survey both interest and willingness to learn more about faith issues.

In Question 4 about the equality of opportunities offered to women and men there was greater consensus with 60 per cent of adults and 67 per cent of young people content that this was already the case.

Question 5 asked about knowing people who have felt excluded from participation in the Church. 38 per cent of adults answered ‘yes’, as did 24 per cent of the young people. In both groups the largest percentage, 25 per cent of the adults and 12 per cent of the young people circled option 2 referring to the experience of a sense of exclusion from participation by female persons. The young people who were aware of exclusion had all responded that they who did not feel a sense of belonging: witnessing exclusion could therefore be a factor in their own disengagement with the Church.

⁹² For example: Matthew Van Duyvenbode, *Mapping the Terrain: Discovering the reality of young Catholics* (London: Catholic Youth Ministry Federation, 2010), Christian Smith, et al., *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults, In, Out of, and Gone from the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁹³ 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

Question 6 asked about barriers to lay participation. 45 per cent of the adults said there were barriers, while only 16 per cent of the sixth year pupils agreed. The lack of engagement with the Church hindered experience of the existing realities but some young people did identify barriers and believed them to arise primarily from clergy, older people, and Church structures (see figure 28).

*'Usually married people/parents do things - younger people are less involved.'*⁹⁴

Adult respondents also cited clergy (30 per cent) and institutional structures (28 per cent) as the greatest barriers, although they recognised that laity could also be barriers: 12 per cent cited women, 12 per cent cited laymen. That is, respondents record situations in which clergy are supportive of lay participation but opposition comes from other laity.

*'Sexist attitudes usually prioritise the interests & leadership of men before women.'*⁹⁵

A male Religious respondent offered a pessimistic view:

*'Nothing to be done about clergy - if you have a rough character who won't cooperate with anyone what can you do? Apart from shoot him!'*⁹⁶

The responses to question 7, relating to current support for the laity, were much more in harmony, with over 70 per cent of both adults and young people aware of volunteer opportunities with the Church. Equally over 40 per cent of both groups were aware of opportunities to study theology although only 5 per cent of young people and 14 per cent of adults were aware that financial assistance might be available

In question 8, on inclusive language, 55 per cent of the young people were unsure, with 19 per cent against it, and 24 per cent for it. The adults had 39 per cent unsure, with 11 per cent against and 48 per cent in favour of its use. This is surprising as inclusive language is now the academic norm and with ingrained political correctness we might have expected the young people to be keen for the Church to conform. I suspect that this question may have been misunderstood, as their responses were more positive to a later question.

⁹⁴ Respondent 460.

⁹⁵ Respondent 247.

⁹⁶ Respondent 110.

In the suggestions offered for Question 9, i.e. what might help laity participate more in the Church, the majority view of both adults and sixth year pupils was that educating the laity about their roles and responsibilities was a priority. 7 per cent of both groups were unsure about what would help.

The second most frequent response for the sixth-years was opportunities to use professional qualifications, and third, more paid jobs in the Church. For adults the next priorities were education of the clergy about the lay apostolate, practical lay formation, and opportunities to use their professional qualifications. It is hardly surprising that young people who are on the brink of leaving school saw relevance in paid jobs and using qualifications. The adults who chose the option 'paid jobs' (23.8 per cent) were mostly people who had ticked all the choices, indicating their support for anything that could help to increase participation. When it came to using qualifications and life experience, adults mostly qualified this choice, adding comments such as '*appropriately*' - '*after training*' - '*with monitoring*'.⁹⁷ This emphasised the need for appropriate assessment or quality assurance of skills and ability for anyone participating in parish ministries or service.

In the 'other' category, some suggestions were:

*'Financial assistance to pursue education and formation opportunities.'*⁹⁸

*'Recognition of the challenges of our own age rather than a presumption that things were better in the past when Father did it all.'*⁹⁹

There was some concern about the viability of the suggestions offered in the question, welcome as they might be:

*'I don't know where the funding would come to support these - and paid positions are a non starter for obvious reasons.'*¹⁰⁰

Repeatedly, stress was laid on the culture that needed to be established before any development of lay involvement could be possible i.e.

*'You need to feel included to participate, e.g. you aren't going to dance alone at a party.'*¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Respondent 279.

⁹⁸ Respondent 104.

⁹⁹ Respondent 22.

¹⁰⁰ Respondent 285.

¹⁰¹ Respondent 427.

In question 10, relating to barriers to participation specifically experienced by women, a majority of the sixth-years (57 per cent) thought there were no barriers while a majority of the adults (48.4 per cent) thought there were. The adults recognised barriers to women's participation in all the suggestions offered but particularly from clergy (30 per cent), institutional structures (31.6 per cent) and preference being given to men (27.3 per cent).

Twenty-four adult respondents also cited other barriers e.g.

*'Gap between the older, conservative Catholics - lay & clergy - and the upcoming generation.'*¹⁰²

*'Females not being ordained as priests.'*¹⁰³

*'Only male deacons means further barriers.'*¹⁰⁴

Of the 41 per cent of sixth-years who thought there were barriers for women many cited the restriction of ordination to only men as a serious barrier, and one female student stated:

*'For Catholics, women are considered either the virgin or the whore, and are undermined and undervalued the majority of the time.'*¹⁰⁵

The range of suggestions in Question 11 as to what might help to increase the participation of women in the Church drew a mixed response. Both adults and young people identified increasing women's involvement in decision making as the top priority, 66.8 per cent and 58.1 per cent respectively. Reforming practices of inequality was supported by 46.9 per cent of adults but only by 28 per cent of the sixth-years. Prayer was considered effective by 47 per cent of adults, but by only 20 per cent of the young people.

39.8 per cent of the adults and 38.7 per cent of the sixth-years supported the suggestion of using gender inclusive language put forward in question 11. These figures differ significantly from those in the direct question about language, question 8. There, only 24 per cent of sixth-years saw this as helpful (much lower than in question 11), in comparison with 48 per cent of adults (higher than in question 11). Perhaps some of those sixth-years that answered 'don't know'

¹⁰² Respondent 252.

¹⁰³ Respondent 423.

¹⁰⁴ Respondent 194.

¹⁰⁵ Respondent 383.

in question 8 understood inclusive language better in this context. The decrease in the percentage of adults supporting the use of inclusive language to those not seeing it as a factor that would change attitudes could result from the wording of question 11, which asked respondents to identify the ‘most effective ways’ of supporting change. Those who had commented that inclusive language should be the norm but that it would not necessarily change culture may have focused in question 11 on matters that they believed could effect attitudinal change.

In question 12, attendance at Sunday Mass attracted the highest vote among the sixth-years (74.2 per cent). This is interesting in the light of poor Mass attendance by young people. Another anomaly was that joining parish groups was the second highest suggestion from young people (53.8 per cent) yet only 34 per cent had indicated current involvement in their parishes. The third highest response of young respondents (47.3 per cent) highlighted prayer, giving a reassuring sense of the spiritual awareness of the young people. These three suggestions were also the top choices for the adults at more than 70 per cent. Involvement in the various ministries and catechesis also had positive responses from more than 50 per cent.

Some of the ‘other’ suggestions were insightful. For instance, a young respondent wrote:

‘More community events would help participation - which should be inclusive of younger parish members who can become disillusioned and feel excluded.’¹⁰⁶

Several adults expressed the need to change hearts and minds as well as structures:

‘What is really required is a complete change in the mind-set of the clergy.’¹⁰⁷

‘There would need to be a more equal partnership between the priest and the laity.’¹⁰⁸

‘More participatory structures at all levels of the Church.’¹⁰⁹

‘Involvement in social outreach - food banks, shelters for homeless people, caring for asylum seekers and refugees, campaigning for justice and peace - evangelising the world, I think it is called!’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Respondent 427.

¹⁰⁷ Respondent 18.

¹⁰⁸ Respondent 41.

¹⁰⁹ Respondent 104.

¹¹⁰ Respondent 121.

*'Ecumenical involvement can open new avenues and is in any case an essential dimension of our Christian ministry.'*¹¹¹

Analysis of total response

There is little difference in the statistics regarding responses from the Scottish Catholic contingent and the whole survey group. This indicates that all those who participated in the research were aware of the situation in their local Catholic communities. Indeed, on the basis of wider knowledge, some could add that lay participation was marked by a '*difference between Scotland and England/Wales*'.¹¹² This differentiation was exemplified by the responses to question 8 where 266 people in the whole survey group indicated that theological studies were part of the current provision open to laity, while only 153 of the Scottish Catholics were aware of this. Comments indicated that this variation is probably due to the fact that Scotland has no national Catholic Institute for theological study, while England and Wales offer a variety of possibilities, including Heythrop, the Maryvale Institute, and the Franciscan International Study Centre, as well as Catholic departments of theology at higher education institutions including St Mary's, Twickenham, Durham, and Roehampton.

The close similarity of results between the total respondents and the Scottish Catholic group suggests that the findings of this small sampling could well be replicated in a wider survey of UK Catholics.

Analysis of Written Submissions

Fifty-six individuals submitted written responses to the four main research questions, 36 men (64.3 per cent) and 20 women (35.7 per cent). Their years of birth ranged from 1925 to 1980, i.e. they were between eighty-eight years and thirty-four years of age. 33 of these respondents were ordained, with 4 of these clergy from other Christian traditions. These respondents came from a variety of backgrounds illustrated in Figure 33.

¹¹¹ Respondent 266.

¹¹² Respondent 279.

It was possible to analyse all the submissions and collate common themes using the ACU Coding Framework (Appendix 3). These themes are linked to the coding reference number or tagline as appropriate.

All 56 responses agreed with Coding ref 1006, i.e. that everything in the research that applied to women applied equally to laymen.

Only one respondent had concerns about the research, suggesting that a focus on the participation of women could neglect other groups or ‘pander to a feminist agenda’ (1007):

‘I am not saying the questions in your survey are not relevant. I fear that they reflect a limited notion of Church, which is in danger of being reflected back to you in the answers you receive, despite the opportunity given for “other” responses.’¹¹³

Two respondents would have liked a clearer definition of what participation meant (1008) but overall, 53 participants (94.6 per cent) expressed interest and support for the research, and were pleased to be involved. One bishop mentioned his interest in finding out:

‘Through the eyes of women what their experience would suggest reforms of the Church should be.’¹¹⁴

56 respondents (100 per cent) were conscious of women’s input at home, and attested to the substantial contribution made by women in parishes, through a wide variety of roles and groups, and by women in Religious life. Typical responses were:

‘Being respected as mothers in general, taking part in God’s plan of creation - in Religious life - living in communities and praying.’¹¹⁵

‘What about the ‘domestic Church? For the vast majority this is where they live as Church, this where they receive (or sadly fail to receive) their spiritual formation and initial catechesis, this is where they live out their sacraments day by day both as adults and as children etc.’¹¹⁶

All mentioned the need for ongoing faith formation for everyone, men and women, clergy and laity:

¹¹³ Respondent 552.

¹¹⁴ Respondent 510.

¹¹⁵ Respondent 529.

¹¹⁶ Respondent 552.

*'Without greater efforts in this area it is hard to envisage the laity being able to fulfil their potential, indeed their vocation, in the Church.'*¹¹⁷

*'Better spiritual and theological formation - every diocese should have formation for parish catechists.'*¹¹⁸

Several echoed the comment that

*'To some extent the issue of women's ordination has also become a barrier to women's participation in the Church.'*¹¹⁹

Question 1 - What are the ways in which women currently participate in the Catholic Church?

Only two respondents were satisfied with current ways of participating. Both stated that all the ministries open to laymen are also open to women and these include: *'All ways except in Holy Orders.'*¹²⁰

54 respondents (96 per cent), while acknowledging the many and varied ways women already contribute to the Church, clearly indicated that they would like to see even greater participation. For instance:

*'Among practising Catholics, women are in the great majority. Even when men attend Church, I suspect this is often helped by a gentle or even tacit persuasion exercised by female members of their families.'*¹²¹

52 respondents (92 per cent) mentioned the historical background, by which they meant pre-Vatican II culture, and explicitly welcomed positive changes that have taken place since the Council in the Church's attitude to women. For instance:

*'I would fully encourage women to take up more senior and responsible roles within the Church. I think we are on the way but more can be done.'*¹²²

54 respondents (96 per cent) noted the various current limitations to women's participation. Many perceived this as caused by personalities and individual understanding of rubrics and rules, rather than Church structures or teaching.

¹¹⁷ Respondent 526.

¹¹⁸ Respondent 542.

¹¹⁹ Respondent 522.

¹²⁰ Respondent 514.

¹²¹ Respondent 511.

¹²² Respondent 508.

One cleric suggested:

*'Some in the Church may have a limited vision of what women should be involved in but I think that would be a very small minority.'*¹²³

53 people (94 per cent) noted the limitation of ordination being closed to women:

*'They participate at the level of parish activism - but have no sacerdotal function.'*¹²⁴

Several respondents were Canon lawyers and all agreed:

*'Canon law allows for very many possibilities for women.'*¹²⁵

The majority of responses to this first question both acknowledge the substantial contribution women already make to the Church, and clearly support further development of opportunities for women's engagement.

Question 2 - What assistance and support are currently offered to women to participate in the Church?

55 (98 per cent) were not aware of any support specifically for women, although one cleric knew of:

*'Associations of the faithful - some of which are specific to supporting women.'*¹²⁶

Another added:

*'We have part-time arrangements or flexi hours to support them in their family commitment.'*¹²⁷

6 (10 per cent) thought hardly any assistance was on offer:

*'Very little - assumption that largely they will do traditional things.'*¹²⁸

*'Little or none - usually the other way round as they are called on to support rather than be supported.'*¹²⁹

49 (87 per cent) realised that some support was available:

¹²³ Respondent 551.

¹²⁴ Respondent 545.

¹²⁵ Respondent 509.

¹²⁶ Respondent 517.

¹²⁷ Respondent 520.

¹²⁸ Respondent 538.

¹²⁹ Respondent 561.

*'They are encouraged to participate at the accepted levels, but not beyond.'*¹³⁰
*'Some financial assistance for academic qualifications and other programmes - but not sufficient.'*¹³¹

*'Women religious are given support in discerning their ministries.'*¹³²

Only one respondent thought there was adequate assistance and support:

*'Courses are available in theology, catechetics and pastoral theology.'*¹³³

37 (66 per cent) highlighted that although there was certainly more support and assistance than previously, this varied:

*'The assistance and support, both in initiating activity or helping once initiated, will differ from parish to parish depending on the attitude of those in a position to offer help (or even to be obstructive).'*¹³⁴

54 (96 per cent) believed that women could access as much support and assistance as was offered to laymen. This was not to say that what was on offer was sufficient, but rather that they felt there was no discrimination in who could take advantage of what was available, that is:

*'Where training exists it is open to all.'*¹³⁵

*'Unsure of extent to which I think there should be specific support for women.... Need we have such support according to gender?'*¹³⁶

One bishop wrote:

*'I don't think I really understand this question - though that answer may in itself give away a great deal about me or about male or clerical attitudes! ... Should I state the obvious, namely that some clergy (and indeed I suppose some laity, male or female) are reluctant to allow women (or indeed any lay person!) to carry responsibility?'*¹³⁷

The answers to this second question suggest that support and training should be equally offered to laywomen and men. There is awareness that in recent years more assistance has been available, although this is qualified by an acknowledgement that more could still be done.

¹³⁰ Respondent 545.

¹³¹ Respondent 528.

¹³² Respondent 507.

¹³³ Respondent 514.

¹³⁴ Respondent 513.

¹³⁵ Respondent 508.

¹³⁶ Respondent 96.

¹³⁷ Respondent 511.

Question 3 - What are barriers to women's participation in the Catholic Church?

7 respondents (12 per cent) thought there were no barriers to women's participation in the Church and one cleric thought the question was loaded:

*'The question presupposes there are barriers.'*¹³⁸

53 (88 per cent) thought there were barriers, although one senior cleric responded:

*'I am not sure - it would be wise to ask women what they think.'*¹³⁹

Others commented:

*'If the Church wants to recognise the abilities that women have there is no reason they can't be used - you don't have to be ordained to exercise leadership in the Church.'*¹⁴⁰

*'I have to say as a man and priest, I am not aware of too many barriers, but that may be chauvinism speaking!'*¹⁴¹

4 (7 per cent) felt barriers existed in the social, professional and religious conditioning of women, although they put these down to very different reasons:

*'Institutional bias and disenfranchisement.'*¹⁴²

*'Barriers to women are more than for men because women have lower self esteem and lack knowledge about their entitlements.'*¹⁴³

12 (21 per cent) found problems in a culture that is controlled by male dominant ideas:

*'Ignorance of priests who do not keep up with women's issues and so maintain the status quo.'*¹⁴⁴

43 (76 per cent) noted the importance of entrenched ideas, which are resistant to change:

*'Culture of fear within the Church - authority, power, hypocrisy rather than compassion and service of others.'*¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ Respondent 515.

¹³⁹ Respondent 524.

¹⁴⁰ Respondent 514.

¹⁴¹ Respondent 521.

¹⁴² Respondent 96.

¹⁴³ Respondent 558.

¹⁴⁴ Respondent 519.

¹⁴⁵ Respondent 557.

*'Women's reluctance to push the boundaries in case they are labelled as disloyal to the Church.'*¹⁴⁶

*'Changes need to be prepared for by catechesis and education so they are clearly understood.'*¹⁴⁷

*'Some priests are bad at delegation -could be so much better if priests would listen to professional experience.'*¹⁴⁸

*'There is the reluctance of clergy to accepting lay members of the Church in positions of responsibility. I consider that this attitude of clergy towards laity is more important than the lack of participation of just women.'*¹⁴⁹

A younger priest wrote:

*'At national and international levels the Church is dominated by men frightened to open their closed lives - to laymen never mind women. Clericalism is a scourge that is unhealthy and preventative of collaboration, trust and cooperation.'*¹⁵⁰

Another cleric took a different line:

*'Aggressive feminism - this can create antipathy.'*¹⁵¹

A female Religious with wide experience of service to the Church did not equivocate in her call for:

*'a radical change throughout the entire Church, whereby everyone's giftedness was valued, and the priestly caste was divested of its power.'*¹⁵²

38 (67 per cent) cited the negative attitude of some priests to women:

*'A latent notion that women are either inferior or else terrifying.'*¹⁵³

One priest wrote:

*'Some Church leaders - priests - don't have a healthy working relationship with women.'*¹⁵⁴

39 (69 per cent) identified a problem in the tendency of some clerics to deny the existence of conflict or difference:

¹⁴⁶ Respondent 544.

¹⁴⁷ Respondent 559.

¹⁴⁸ Respondent 530.

¹⁴⁹ Respondent 562.

¹⁵⁰ Respondent 555.

¹⁵¹ Respondent 542.

¹⁵² Respondent 42.

¹⁵³ Respondent 561.

¹⁵⁴ Respondent 522.

*'Sometimes specific invitations to people need to be made as lack of confidence or fear of the more dominant can be a factor in preventing involvement.'*¹⁵⁵

*'Priests often won't ask for help even when they haven't got answers.'*¹⁵⁶

A senior cleric wrote:

*'Why are priests barriers? Answer - as PP's [Parish Priests] they have been given too much power & authority.'*¹⁵⁷

Only 6 respondents (10 per cent) thought that men's fear of women's participation was a problem, yet 36 people (64 per cent) mentioned the clergy's fear of women's participation:

*'There may be a clerical misogyny in some clergy - does that extend to those in leadership roles in the Church? ... I'm not sure.'*¹⁵⁸

*'Prejudice! Lack of trust especially from clergy.'*¹⁵⁹

40 (71 per cent) highlighted the lack of opportunities for the lay apostolate:

*'Many women - and men - have no confidence in their ability and haven't had the opportunity to study their faith or learn pastoral skills.'*¹⁶⁰

11 (19 per cent) mentioned the patriarchal system and the hierarchical structure of the Church as barriers:

*'A male dominated hierarchy.'*¹⁶¹

*'Probably women feel inferior and intimidated by the experience of a male hierarchy and their traditional roles in a liturgical setting and maybe having to call men with very limited experience of life "Father" is a factor.'*¹⁶²

*'The hierarchical system in general is not conducive to promoting women and making use of their talents.'*¹⁶³

54 (96 per cent) thought that the only real barriers to the participation of women should be those that pertained to duties exclusive to the priesthood:

¹⁵⁵ Respondent 533.

¹⁵⁶ Respondent 558.

¹⁵⁷ Respondent 554.

¹⁵⁸ Respondent 516.

¹⁵⁹ Respondent 528.

¹⁶⁰ Respondent 535.

¹⁶¹ Respondent 536.

¹⁶² Respondent 550.

¹⁶³ Respondent 539.

*'What can women do - everything except "Saying Mass!" and anything that the Priests don't want to do!'*¹⁶⁴

12 (21 per cent) thought that the Church's current teaching on the ordination of women was a barrier although one cleric also saw a barrier arising from:

*'Women's perceptions and mistaken ideas about ordination.'*¹⁶⁵

9 (16 per cent) thought the Pope's ban on the discussion of the possibility of women's ordination was in itself a barrier:

*'Problem in refusal to discuss or consider the possibility of female ordination.'*¹⁶⁶

One bishop wrote:

*'In the matter of ordination, there is an interesting article in The Tablet for 4 May 2013, page 23, which illustrates that many people would like to find some way in which women could be given involvement in the work that at present is restricted to ordained men.'*¹⁶⁷

For some respondents the barriers spring from problems at the core of the Church:

*'The fact is that even among Catholics the Church is perceived in a very poor light. The analogy of the Church I use from time to time is that of a pyramid. The base is crumbling and eventually the pyramid will implode unless the base is renovated, rejuvenated and made secure.'*¹⁶⁸

*'Lack of theological training in dioceses and parishes. Lack of awareness of the teaching and fruits of Vatican II. Some women themselves are the main obstacles to their inclusion. Critical attitudes without mercy and understanding do not do any good.'*¹⁶⁹

Apathy or disillusionment among clergy is also a factor - a priest ordained just after Vatican II said:

*'my generation had their enthusiasm beaten down by authoritative bishops almost doing a 'haka' at any suggestion of aggiornamento.'*¹⁷⁰

The majority of respondents to this third question agreed that there were barriers to women's participation in the Church at present, which needed attitudinal change as well as changes at institutional level.

¹⁶⁴ Respondent 549.

¹⁶⁵ Respondent 523.

¹⁶⁶ Respondent 545.

¹⁶⁷ Respondent 513.

¹⁶⁸ Respondent 553.

¹⁶⁹ Respondent 563.

¹⁷⁰ Respondent 556.

Question 4 - What are some ways in which women's participation in the Church can be increased?

44 (78 per cent) thought a promotion of gender equality and opportunities would be helpful:

*'First and foremost a commitment to equality - surely we are all created equal in the eyes of God.'*¹⁷¹

*'Put an end to clericalism - value the laity at their true worth.'*¹⁷²

*'In some dioceses in Africa, and South Africa in particular, there are women workshops and retreats in which the importance of women and responsibility are highlighted.'*¹⁷³

A canon lawyer wrote:

*'Ensuring that the possibilities in canon law are made real!'*¹⁷⁴

21 (37 per cent) mentioned the need to foster respect for the unique contribution women could make to the Church:

*'Recognition of their talents and baptismal rights.'*¹⁷⁵

*'Women are their own best advocates.'*¹⁷⁶

One older respondent who mentioned the many changes she had witnessed in the Church wrote:

*'It is not necessary to be a nun anymore for women to be involved, they are good as Eucharistic Ministers, especially with the sick, so would make excellent chaplains.'*¹⁷⁷

45 (80 per cent) wanted to see increased women's involvement in leadership and decision making in the Church:

*'Structures in place allowing women to administer parishes.'*¹⁷⁸

*'At diocesan level and Roman level women could be more involved and consulted.'*¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ Respondent 539.

¹⁷² Respondent 539.

¹⁷³ Respondent 522.

¹⁷⁴ Respondent 509.

¹⁷⁵ Respondent 514.

¹⁷⁶ Respondent 546.

¹⁷⁷ Respondent 534.

¹⁷⁸ Respondent 314.

¹⁷⁹ Respondent 524.

*'It's a matter of changing attitudes rather than canonical possibilities.'*¹⁸⁰

47 (83 per cent) advocated formation that would eradicate any beliefs and associated practices that do not promote the equality of men and women:

*'Building up trust between clergy and women.'*¹⁸¹

*'Updating the formation of the clergy is paramount to ensuring change.'*¹⁸²

40 (71 per cent) advocated the setting up of communication processes within the Church that facilitated broad consultation:

*'Council of priests and female laity - present at deanery meetings?'*¹⁸³

*'Parish priests especially need to be educated to understand what their role is - listening and talking to the laity (men and women) and seeking their opinions. They need to be open-minded - in fact, there is a lot to do in relation to the training of priests.'*¹⁸⁴

41 (73 per cent) thought women's opinions should be solicited on key issues within the Church where they will have pertinent insights:

*'Need for a voice in more structured way that can actually influence the shape of the Church.'*¹⁸⁵

38 (67 per cent) wanted to encourage women to have a voice in the Church:

*'By giving them the confidence to think that they can and should be available and eligible for the many forms of service and responsibility open in the Church.'*¹⁸⁶

45 (80 per cent) identified the need to educate women and men in the vision of shared leadership:

*'Women should be visible at worship, praying and leading the prayer.'*¹⁸⁷

*'A benign interpretation of canon law - easier to get forgiveness than permission - has allowed women to get involved in a variety of ministries in some parishes already.'*¹⁸⁸

*'Some clergy are weary of structures without life or love in them and so wary of creating new ones.'*¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁰ Respondent 516.

¹⁸¹ Respondent 528.

¹⁸² Respondent 510.

¹⁸³ Respondent 521.

¹⁸⁴ Respondent 550.

¹⁸⁵ Respondent 538.

¹⁸⁶ Respondent 518.

¹⁸⁷ Respondent 537.

¹⁸⁸ Respondent 512.

12 (21 per cent) felt that evolving discussion about the ordination of women should be allowed:

*'Unresolved issues around ordination, especially as this is not allowed to be discussed!'*¹⁹⁰

9 (16 per cent) mentioned the need to examine the position of women in the early Church as deacons and leaders at the Eucharist, and their presence at the Last Supper:

*'The bible reflects how considerable was Jesus' reliance upon female assistance - they participated literally from the conception of Jesus' mission to the world.'*¹⁹¹

6 (10 per cent) stated they wanted changes to allow women to be ordained as deacons. The same percentage, though not the same 6 individuals, wanted change to permit women to be ordained as priests:

*'Women could be deacons.'*¹⁹²

*'I would welcome the admission of women to the diaconate - that was for SEC the first step in ordination issues.'*¹⁹³

Many others agreed with the clerical respondent who wrote:

*'The priesthood needs to be sorted out first before there is any question of ordination being made more inclusive.'*¹⁹⁴

A Church of Scotland minister was able to contribute the experience of other traditions:

*'Ordination is not the issue, nor the answer - the issue is the nature of the Church - when it becomes the Church of the People of God rather than of the clergy.'*¹⁹⁵

A priest added: *'Priesthood is not the whole or sum of the Church's life.'*¹⁹⁶

34 (60 per cent) saw merit in removing the connection to allow more lay participation at higher levels:

¹⁸⁹ Respondent 563.

¹⁹⁰ Respondent 528.

¹⁹¹ Respondent 525.

¹⁹² Respondent 536.

¹⁹³ Respondent 540.

¹⁹⁴ Respondent 556.

¹⁹⁵ Respondent 559.

¹⁹⁶ Respondent 518.

*'We must identify those roles which are strictly proper only to clergy so as to open up all other roles to laity of both sexes.'*¹⁹⁷

A cleric wrote:

*'Better education (of clergy and laity) about the distinction between leadership and power - more frequent and less patronising recognition of women's contribution to the Church.'*¹⁹⁸

44 (78 per cent) called for more opportunities for using the academic and theological qualifications and experiences of women in the service of the Church:

*'Support and funding for women to undertake theology studies and then opportunities to use these in paid ministry.'*¹⁹⁹

*'Allow them to lead services in Church.'*²⁰⁰

*'Need for recognition of people's gifts and skills regardless of gender - how many women are theologically qualified in Scotland? - Are they being used by the Church?'*²⁰¹

Many echoed the comments of a Religious respondent who wrote:

*'Laws need to change for women to do more and they need to have the faith to have a go - we all need to take a leap of faith!'*²⁰²

Many others shared a priest's view:

*'We need real dialogue and understanding between priests and women.'*²⁰³

Encouragingly a bishop wrote:

*'I think there is a strong case to be made for stronger lay involvement in the many areas of Church life and where that awareness is growing the participation of women and the support given to them will be equal to that of men.'*²⁰⁴

A married laywoman wrote:

*'We must be co-workers in humility and in the messy business of being human and realist not cynical and not exploit the Church community for our own egocentric needs. Impossible? Yes without God's help but with God nothing is impossible.'*²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁷ Respondent 520.

¹⁹⁸ Respondent 511.

¹⁹⁹ Respondent 421.

²⁰⁰ Respondent 541.

²⁰¹ Respondent 510.

²⁰² Respondent 535.

²⁰³ Respondent 519.

²⁰⁴ Respondent 551.

²⁰⁵ Respondent 561.

A young priest wrote:

*'Many people think that the Church runs itself and will always be there for them - especially the younger generation. Need to create a real sense of mission for all in the Church.'*²⁰⁶

A Church of Scotland minister offered the experience within that model of Church:

*'Within the CofS a 'bottom-up' movement and a more progressive approach from the top converged - although it has taken some time to get to this point there are now many women ministers and elder.'*²⁰⁷

A layman wrote:

*'The reluctance of clergy of accepting lay members of the church in positions of responsibility. That reduces the opportunity for laywomen and men to change the prevalent attitudes to women. I consider that this attitude of clergy towards lay people is more important than the lack of participation of just women.'*²⁰⁸

An older cleric offered the following:

*'A little humour to end! I am a prelate of the Pope - a Monsignor - one of my duties, if in Rome, would be to hand the Pope his sermon notes, or to open the door, a WOMAN could do any of these.'*²⁰⁹

This fourth question yielded a variety of positive suggestions for ways to increase the participation of laity in general, and women in particular: dialogue and collaboration between clergy and laity, funding for education and training, as well as recognition, respect and utilisation of the skills and talents of every member of the Church.

Analysis of Interviews and Focus Groups

These personal encounters between myself as the researcher and other individuals were the most fruitful source of opinion. They gave rise to many interesting insights, which proved to be in line with the findings from the quantitative survey.

Among lay participants, there was clear evidence of frustration because of their awareness of pastoral needs, and of the availability of skilled and willing lay

²⁰⁶ Respondent 526.

²⁰⁷ Respondent 548.

²⁰⁸ Respondent 562.

²⁰⁹ Respondent 554.

volunteers predisposed to meet these needs yet thwarted by resistant clergy. Some had experienced good models of collaborative ministry in their own parishes. However, they were aware that this was not always the case elsewhere.²¹⁰

There was unanimous recognition of the need for lay formation, particularly education in Church teaching and praxis, as they felt many people had been poorly catechised as children, and never catechised as adults.²¹¹ Several mentioned that Church teaching in the past, on topics such as suicide, mixed marriages, unmarried mothers, relations with other denominations, had scandalised many people and caused them to disengage with the Church.²¹² Many believed that most Catholics were still unaware of the changes in Church teaching since Vatican II, and that because of lack of adult formation, they had simply formed their own opinions in good conscience on these difficult issues. Poignantly, among older women of a more traditional generation, there was a common concern for the Church to be more compassionate rather than the rigid enforcer of rules that gave little leeway for human frailty.²¹³

Many commented on the disparity between the attitude of the institutional Church towards bishops and priests who caused scandal, committed crimes, or were guilty of moral malfeasance, and their stance towards the sins of the laity.²¹⁴ Although all the lay participants gave credit to the majority of the clergy who lived exemplary lives, they admitted to their shame at seeing how poorly the hierarchy had handled recent clerical scandals. Several mentioned the lack of integrity and transparency that had made the hierarchy seem secretive and complicit. The perception that error and scandal could be consigned to history without investigation or explanation was deemed ludicrous.²¹⁵

All agreed that the clerical role no longer gave the incumbent automatic respect or authority; rather priests, like everyone else, need to earn respect. Many

²¹⁰ Focus Group B.

²¹¹ Focus Group D.

²¹² Focus Group C.

²¹³ Focus Group C.

²¹⁴ Focus Group F.

²¹⁵ Focus Group G.

mentioned the need for bishops to be more in touch with the realities of people's lives, to be less like Chief Executive Officers of a corporation, and more like the pastors and teachers they were called to be.

Among clerical participants, there was frustration with brother clergy, but also vexation at the apathy of many laity. Problems arose from the inadequate formation given to men in seminary, as well as from the lack of study and formation offered to priests afterwards.²¹⁶ Priests and bishops alike were sure that having the right men appointed as bishops was crucial. Some identified a resurgence of the kind of mentality that existed pre Vatican II, where there was more concern about *'mitres rather than ministering.'*²¹⁷ One bishop reported that Bishops' Conference meetings now focus on governance or structural management to the detriment of discussion of pastoral concerns.²¹⁸ Several bishops disclosed that their endeavours to include more women in participation at parish and diocesan level had met with opposition from their priests.²¹⁹ Another called for: *'more frequent and less patronising recognition of women's contribution to the Church.'*²²⁰

All commented on the problems caused by clericalism, some adding that this seemed to have been made worse by the re-introduction of the Permanent Diaconate.²²¹ All mentioned the possibility of opening up ministries to women and laymen, the need for good and continuing faith formation for adults, the necessity of developing more methods of consultation and dialogue, and the potential benefits of ensuring that everyone can use their gifts to benefit the Church and society as a whole.

The focus group of Religious women, with an awe-inspiring breadth of experience and qualifications between them, stressed the liberating power of theological education to enable women to have the confidence to speak out.²²² Those who had been involved professionally in seminaries, called for priests to have a more inclusive formation, and in particular that seminarians should study

²¹⁶ Focus Group E.

²¹⁷ Focus Group E.

²¹⁸ Respondent 510.

²¹⁹ Respondent 512, 513.

²²⁰ Respondent 511.

²²¹ Focus Group E.

²²² Focus Group A.

alongside the laity and be taught by women and laymen as well as priests. They also identified the need for more holistic seminary training, with as much emphasis placed on the development of pastoral and social skills as on academic attainment. They shared a perception that many priests used the excuse of being '*far too busy*', to block any initiatives not their own. The Religious, while recognising that many women have taken advantage of the new opportunities opening up in Church ministry, were concerned about the number of other women who have bought into clericalism and understand their main role in life as to '*stir the priest's tea*.'²²³ There was criticism of Church structures, which have not adapted to meet current needs, and of the lack of accountability of the clergy.

The Sisters perceived a gulf between the clerical understanding of human living and that of the laity, who have learned to be accepting and compassionate to the realities of family life and inter-personal relationships. There was concern about the attitudes among the clergy that allow them to ignore the expertise of laity. Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults was mentioned, as one example of the hierarchy employing professionals then ignoring their advice. However, the Religious were not despondent: they were committed to finding solutions, rather than just identifying the problems. They accepted that nuns have a standing within the Church, in a way that laywomen do not, but reiterated that this too is limited, and that they are discouraged from challenging or suggesting new ways of being Church.

The consensus was that along with the priority of lay and clerical formation, an education of conscience and a call for personal witness are necessary.

Contrasts and Comparisons

In the 1999 Australian *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report, key themes were identified, which will here be used to glean additional observations from the responses in this research in 2013.

Contrasts

²²³ Respondent 272.

In the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report, written submissions evidence a substantial number of female respondents with hurtful experiences at the hands of the institutional Church or particular clergy. Women in the current survey do not replicate this. Many have shared their criticisms and frustrations, but did not cite hurtful experiences, and all are quite positive about moving forward rather than dwelling on the past.

In the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report, as in the USA, and New Zealand research, there is discussion of the ‘sin of sexism’.²²⁴ However, in the 2013 survey, clericalism is the term most frequently used when talking about issues to do with lay participation. For instance, one respondent commented:

*‘It’s not just the wealth of women’s talents and experience that are ignored by the hierarchy that we tend to readily call the Church but men as well. I marvel at how much experience, expertise and good will amongst the laity is kept under wraps by the clergy to maintain their hold. That’s why I don’t want to limit this to another sword for feminism. Men are equally struggling to know how to respond to the challenges of faith today.’*²²⁵

In Australia, there was great concern over pastoral ministries and the limitations placed upon the laity in exercising these, particularly in chaplaincy work. In Scotland, this has not been an issue as currently few laity are involved in official chaplaincy work in hospitals, prisons, schools, or workplaces. Chaplaincy however, was an area that many respondents mentioned the Church should open up to lay involvement, particularly to women. Perhaps Scotland’s slowness to open up chaplaincy ministries to laity could at least have the positive benefit of being able to learn from the experience of others, rather than replicate any mistakes. In the 2013 survey, respondents also felt that involving more women in Church finances, which tends to be male dominated at present, would be positive as they could *‘sometimes determine assisting in funding educational matters and the pastoral needs of the parish.’*²²⁶

The Australians identified as a priority the need to establish a Women’s Commission linked to the national Bishops’ Conference, and this was a common request in the research across the Anglosphere countries. However, the 2013

²²⁴ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 125.

²²⁵ Respondent 561.

²²⁶ Respondent 543.

respondents in Scotland did not see this as a solution. Perhaps this was due to a perception that while a Commission could help to raise the profile of women's issues, the dangers of its being exclusive, alienating, and not representative negate any benefit. One male Religious responded:

*'A Women's Commission ... how would it be constituted, who would be members? Strident, self-nominated harridans or great-and-good complacent nominees? Would it just be a talking-shop, or a means of defusing the ticking bomb of women's issues, without in fact addressing them? Not that I am cynical, of course!'*²²⁷

The establishment of 'Lay Commissions' in each diocese, with equal numbers of women and men, was suggested as a better solution, though even this was recognised to have limitations, as such commissions are rarely fully representative.

Scotland does not have the same issues as Australia with Indigenous people. However, the Scottish failure to eradicate sectarian attitudes, and the limits of the welcome and support we extend to migrants, do bring about a similar need for dialogue here with those who are perceived as 'others'.

Comparisons

A *leitmotif* running through all the Anglosphere research on the participation of women, including the 2013 Scottish research is that Catholic women are very diverse in their identities and opinions. Labels are often misleading and unhelpful, but the Anglosphere research finds the same 'dichotomy', as identified in the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report findings, between 'traditional' women and 'scriptural' women in the Church.²²⁸ This is especially evident in the USA, with the growing number of 'new' or 'Catholic' feminists. One of the challenges for the contemporary Church is how to hold these diverse views in creative tension, emphasising the catholicity of the Church to ensure everyone is welcome, respected, and nurtured spiritually. This may not be an easy task, but in my view it is an essential one.

All the Anglosphere research gives credit to the considerable contribution women already make to the life of the Church, albeit mostly in a variety of

²²⁷ Respondent 114.

²²⁸ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, 373.

ancillary roles. It was generally acknowledged that women comprise the majority of parish congregations, yet as one cleric commented in his submission: *'It is said that two thirds of the Church's regular workers were women. I believe that figure - but are they 'participating?'*²²⁹

A female respondent added:

*'Remember the old joke, that the Church retains a male-only priesthood to ensure that there is at least one man in the Church.'*²³⁰

Despite this gender imbalance, respondents in both the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report and the 2013 research identified gender inequality as a major root of the problems women encounter with the Church. This devaluing of women is different from the active discrimination that shapes sexism, but no less damaging. Other Anglosphere research echoed this concern. The ACBC pledged to tackle this in Australia, with the development of new policies and practices in the first two of their Nine National Decisions. We can but hope for similar response from other bishops' conferences, when they consider the findings from research into women's role in the Church.

In both Australia and Scotland the question of the ordination of women arose, even though the 2013 research specifically never used these words in any of the questions, in order to keep the focus on lay participation. Irrespective of the hierarchy's ban on debate of this issue, discussion has not disappeared. Indeed, in 2013 there was more mention of the female diaconate than in the Australian responses, whether as a first step, or as a compromise solution. In both surveys the greater emphasis was on increasing opportunity for lay ecclesial ministry or service.

Although organisations were not studied specifically as part of the Scottish research, respondents mentioned various situations arising from their experience in Catholic schools, diocesan offices, or other Church groups that witness to the continued existence of the kind of inequality between women and men in senior or leadership positions in the workplace that the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report uncovered. This mirrors recent research in secular society that has highlighted the lack of widespread gender equality, despite national and

²²⁹ Respondent 525.

²³⁰ Respondent 544.

international legislation regarding equal opportunities. For example, gender inequality persists also in institutions of academic theology as portrayed in the recent report by Guest, Sharma, and Song, on *Gender and Career Progression in Theology and Religious Studies*.²³¹

Mention was made of the formation of the clergy in all the Anglosphere research projects considered in this thesis. Considerable criticism was voiced - much of it from clerical participants - of the idea that the Catholic clergy is the only profession in the modern world that appears to see little need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). This attitude persists despite Vatican II's call for ongoing formation for the clergy,²³² which was reiterated by John Paul II in 1992:

The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and lifelong assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment is considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity.²³³

In the light of clerical sex abuse cases, and other scandals involving the clergy in recent times, which hint at a widespread underlying lack of psychological and moral maturity among clergy, a radical renewal of the seminary system is called for. The discernment of the suitability of candidates, and their training, which needs to extend long after ordination, are both seen as in need of strengthening. In the Scottish survey, both clergy and laity highlighted this issue, giving anecdotal reports of problematic incidents. Some were humorous: for instance a bishop recounted an incident of a priest who had fainted at Mass one day. Several female Religious in the congregation immediately rushed to his assistance. However, when he came round, rather than thanking them, the priest chased them away in horror.²³⁴

Involving women more in decision-making was seen as necessary by participants in both the Australian and Scottish surveys. Although there was no consensus in what this actually entailed, comments in the Scottish survey seemed to indicate

²³¹ M. Guest, et al. *Gender and Career Progression in Theology and Religious Studies* (Durham, UK: Durham University, 2013).

²³² *Lumen Gentium* 28, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*; *Optatam Totius*.

²³³ John Paul II, (1992) *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. 2.

²³⁴ Respondent 510.

that it should be aimed at cracking any '*stained glass ceiling*' which prevented women from using their skills, qualifications and experiences for the good of the Church, simply because of their gender. The survey responses echo Pope John Paul II's observation: 'It is ... urgently necessary to take concrete steps by providing room for women to participate in different fields and at all levels, including decision-making processes, above all in matters which concern women themselves.'²³⁵

As the Australian research identified: 'One of the greatest challenges to emerge from the research is the need to create a range of opportunities in the Church for respectful listening and dialogue concerning the experiences, needs and aspirations of women'.²³⁶ The 2013 Scottish research findings evidence parallel sentiments, articulated by men as well as women.

Summary of Key Findings of the 2013 Research in Scotland

At the mere mention of a research survey on the participation of women in the Church, a common reaction was: 'Is this about women priests?' or 'Is this a feminist protest?' As the researcher, I clarified from the beginning that the focus of my research was on the lay vocation of men as well as women. Academic rigour underpinned the research, and its focus was on the Christian teaching of the equal dignity and value of every human person. A useful by-product was an audit of the previously perhaps unrecognised, certainly undocumented, but substantial contribution, of women to the Scottish Church over the fifty years since the Second Vatican Council. The survey responses tally with Linda Woodhead's insight that men might lead the Christian Churches but women fill them.²³⁷

The results from these surveys speak for themselves. Some responses evidence a sense of frustration and disappointment with the institutional Church. Others indicate some annoyance with those who challenge the status quo. All commentators however, reflect a faith commitment and a respect and love for the Church as the people of God, the followers of Christ. There are neither angry diatribes, nor any attacks on those holding conflicting views, although there are clearly expressed differences of opinion.

²³⁵ John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (1996) 58.

²³⁶ MacDonald, et al., *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, Executive summary 12.

²³⁷ Linda Woodhead, 'She who believes in me', *The Tablet*, January 19, 2013, 20.

An immediate theme that emerged was that there is no such entity as a 'Catholic woman'. There are diverse women, who are Catholics, and there are diverse Catholics who are women, and many of these have more in common with other Catholics who are men, than with other women. There are wide varieties of spiritualities among women, just as there are different pastoral needs. No particular strand of feminism was seen as better than another; rather there are simply areas of distinction. The Christian understanding of equality and respect for every human person should ensure that within the Church there is room for all shades of opinion about the female person. Pope Francis recently expressed his sense that there was a 'need to develop a profound theology of womanhood'.²³⁸ Survey responses here would seem to agree rather with those theologians who stress that what is necessary is a theology of the laity, of women and men together as sharers in a common humanity graced by God. Almost every respondent mentioned formation in some form, whether in relation to faith, in academic and practical areas, or in theology. Men and women, clergy and laity, were all perceived to need more opportunities for adult education that would benefit the Church and the world, as well as the individual.

Vatican II neither ruptured nor negated continuity with the past. Rather, the Council heralded reforms and renewal as part of God's plan of salvation history which respondents recognised. When understood as something persistently needed by human institutions to ensure faithfulness and integrity to the gospel, reform is perceived by most respondents as challenging but not threatening. So too, the inclusion of women in Church life and ministry was understood as in continuity with the teaching of Jesus and the life of the Christian community throughout the ages.

Within the Christian community the diversity of persons, male and female, and states of life, clerical and lay, was recognised not as divisive but rather as an enhancement, and a potential catalyst for building solidarity and unanimity in the wider society. I would suggest that the same principles that apply to dialogue and solidarity between the denominations could also be applied

²³⁸ Francis, 'Press conference on plane returning from WYD in Brazil', July 28, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-conferenza-stampa_en.html.

between the sexes. The model of receptive ecumenism, of listening to and learning from others, could be utilised to facilitate the finding of a synthesis between the needs and aspirations of men and women, and between clergy and laity too.

The research identified effective communication, and respectful consultation, as key tools for the promotion of greater participation of and collaboration between all the faithful in the life of the Church. Specifically, forums for discussion between clergy and laity, equally constituted of both women and men, were believed to be crucial in the current climate.

Respondents also identified the importance of work for justice and peace by people of faith, and the need to live the gospel as well as preach it. In this way, respondents supported the implementation of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to develop a more open and inclusive Church in Scotland.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the process, statistical results, and the key findings of the empirical research survey conducted in 2013. While this research project could be criticized for not being comprehensive enough to determine generalisations, I would agree with experienced researchers who identify more difficulties from too much data than having only a small sample.²³⁹

I have identified the differences and similarities between the findings of this piece of research with those reported in *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, which formed a baseline for my own empirical work. There are clearly key common findings, such as the reaffirmation of the significance of authentic witness to the equality of men and women, and the need for opportunities for ongoing formation for both laity and clergy. Although the topic of the ordained ministry arose, it was the expansion of lay ecclesial ministry that was the main focus of interest and concern. There was a strong consensus that the needs of both the Church and society could be met by better use of the wide variety of skills and expertise among the lay faithful. The Scottish research also identified

²³⁹ For example: Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography: a way of seeing* (London: Altimira Press, 1999).

the urgency of dialogue involving all sections and both sexes of the community of faith. The wide variety of perspectives among both Catholic women and men highlights the necessity of understanding these, as well as the challenge of finding ways to harmonise them.

The 2013 research contributes to the growing archive of studies in ecclesiology and on women's participation in the Church, and can thus add a new layer of interpretation. The themes that have been identified here, which will be analysed in more depth in chapter five, provide paradigms that further research can develop.

CHAPTER 5: RENEWING THE VISION:

Recommendations for applying the research findings to Church life.

‘Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land and enjoy security’
(Ps 37:3)

Introduction

This dissertation has summarised research undertaken in order to uncover the achievements and difficulties of women’s participation in the Catholic Church over the last fifty years. We have considered the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on women’s roles and responsibilities within the Church. We have identified key magisterial teaching that developed after the Council, and we have scrutinised some of the work by local Churches in the Anglosphere nations to receive and implement the teaching regarding the participation of women in the Church. We then considered the current situation regarding the involvement of women in the local Church in Scotland by means of a small empirical survey.

The evidence from the research considered over the last two chapters is of a constant current of participation by women in the Church. However, this engagement mainly takes place at grassroots level, so there has been little recognition of its strength and plenitude. We have also seen that the question of women’s participation is closely related to that of the participation of the laity as a whole, men as well as women: this is not simply a feminist concern.

The affirmation of lay involvement in the services and ministries of the Church is fully in line with the hopes and vision expressed by Vatican II, and in the teaching of the Church over the last fifty years, surveyed in the first two chapters. The Council stressed the equality of men and women, the foundational vocation of all the baptised to be the People of God, and the Church’s mission to be authentic witnesses of the gospel and of service to the world. In line with the teaching of the Council, the 1983 Code of Canon Law opened up new possibilities for the participation of the laity in the Church’s mission and ministry, thus putting in place a framework that only needed practical implementation.

However, the common themes emerging from the research undertaken across the Anglosphere about the participation of women in the Church, including my own research findings from 2013, indicate that while significant progress has been achieved, much more is still necessary. What can be done to ensure that all the sound academic endeavour of the past is responded to and made fruitful by further development, rather than shelved and ignored? What can these research findings contribute to the process of full integration of women, and recognition of the vital role of the laity in the Church's mission?

In this concluding chapter, I will suggest a new strategy, namely obliquity, for using research findings in the Church context, which could ensure that they do not remain merely theoretical postulations, but rather underpin action, and facilitate enrichment. This is fully in line with the axiological development recorded in all the survey data where numbers of laity, women and men, have undertaken study and availed themselves of every opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the local Church, without waiting for hierarchical recognition or commissioning. These opportunities have mainly been of a substrative order, in ancillary positions, but they have all been within the Church, not outside of, or in conflict with current Church structures and policies

We have identified many themes uncovered by the research that support the involvement of laity, and identified some obstacles to participation. There is not scope to explore all these here, but hopefully they will be considered in the future research of others in the field of ecclesiology.

For now, we will concentrate on looking more deeply into several key issues that were common to the findings of all the Anglosphere research. In exploring these issues further, we will highlight the positive contributions made by laity and especially women to the life of the Church, while suggesting solutions to recognised impediments to participation:

- Firstly: the reality of the diversity of Catholic women. We will identify what has been learned, and what still needs to be done to reconcile their differences and find a *via media* of solidarity and respect.
- Secondly: the possibilities inherent in engagement with contemporary culture, focussing on the need to develop consultation and dialogue to

truly foster the *sensus fidelium* and the participation of all the people of God, overcoming any sense of exclusivity or disempowerment.

- Finally: the need to re-evaluate the vocation of the laity and provide opportunities for ongoing formation, irrespective of gender or state of life, so as to benefit the Church and overcome barriers of clericalism and the squandering of skills and expertise.

Framework for the Future

The Scottish economist John Kay defined the term ‘obliquity’ to describe the process that is the antipathy of control and direction. Obliquity manages to achieve complex objectives by tackling them indirectly.¹ This seems to me the ideal strategy for effecting change in the Church and ensuring that theory becomes universal praxis. As I shall show, obliquity is already present in ecclesial activity that starts at grass roots level, is non-confrontational, reflects a servant leadership mentality, and is reactive rather than prescriptive.

John Kay takes a holistic approach to institutional management and organisation, urging a mind-set that is broad and inclusive, rather than restricted to profit or performance. Kay suggests a focus on the original purpose, whether that is constructing a canal or building up a pharmaceutical company²: I suggest that in the situation of the Church, this would be the proclamation of the ‘good news’. The Church is still motivated by this purpose but has developed significantly from an itinerant band of disciples of Jesus preaching and teaching the gospels, to a hierarchical institution which is constituted by structures.

I suggest that like chaos theory, obliquity focuses on the wonderful complexity and unpredictability of nature, in this case on human nature. This aligns coherently with the Christian understanding of everything as created in the image and likeness of God. Christians see in the diversity of humanity and in the uniqueness of each human person reasons for celebration and affirmation. Therefore, the Church, as God’s people, should appreciate that human persons are as unpredictable and subject to change as are the situations in life in which they find themselves. As Vatican II understood, the Church cannot remain

¹ John Kay, *Obliquity: Why our goals are best achieved indirectly* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

² John Kay, “Obliquity,” *Capitalism and Society*, Vol. 7: Issue 1, Article 2 (2012): 1-2.

static. Instead, it must be sensitive to the nuances of each age and be open to exploring those that can help achieve the goal of building God's kingdom.

Obliquity also corresponds with the findings of this research, which clearly shows that women are already undertaking education and getting involved in every area of the Church that is open to them, rather than waiting for policy change at the hierarchical level to open up further opportunities. An exception to this is the small number of women who have taken direct action out of frustration at the slowness of change, for example by choosing to be ordained illicitly as Catholic priests. This direct action has placed them outside of the Church, in contrast to the many women who are obliquely working for change within the institution. Similarly, significant numbers of women have chosen to leave the Church, frustrated by inequality and intransigence, however my research reveals the many more who have stayed and contributed. The research cited here witnesses to the many women across the world that are involved in diverse ministries in the Church, because they perceived a need and chose to respond. Some study and work away quietly, largely unnoticed or valued, yet relied upon for the day-to-day sustaining of parish life. Others have been empowered through their study not only to engage with the ministries open to them but also to challenge the processes and mentalities that hinder true inclusivity and development.

Obliquity also echoes Carmel McEnroy's confidence that just as 'the seed that is planted and dies for a time will spring forth to new life in another season' the women who attended Vatican II would leave a significant legacy.³ McEnroy meant that nothing that is good is wasted, no matter how long it takes to come to fruition. Even when a common goal is understood and valued, it may take time to gain knowledge of the systems that can facilitate or hinder the achieving of that goal, and to develop an understanding of how best to use these. Perhaps particularly within the Catholic Church, direct action is not always the best way to achieve change: circumnavigation often needs to be utilised, and paradoxes explored. In his address to the bishops at the close of the first session of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family in autumn 2014, Pope Francis spoke of the

³ Carmel McEnroy, *Guests in their Own House: The Women of Vatican II* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996), 12.

‘tensions and temptations’ in the Church, composed as it is of human beings.⁴

Yet he has no doubt that with a common purpose, prayerful reflection, and respect for differing opinions, solutions can be found.

Pope Francis is also clear that ‘reform always begins with spiritual and pastoral initiatives before structural changes’.⁵ There are grounds for hope in the evidence that at local, community level there has indeed been an increase in the participation of women over the half-century since the Council. Vatican II reiterated the Church’s belief in the primacy of conscience, particularly in *Gaudium et Spes* 16 where conscience is poetically described as the inner core of a person where God speaks to them, revealing what is good and true and what is not. The research findings here evidence women who have informed their consciences and have discerned a way of participating that is authentic for them, however oblique, and will continue to engage in this way.

The research surveyed, conducted and presented here, however, includes many references to the need for hierarchical change. These allude to systemic reform of processes that have restricted - and continue to restrict - the utilisation of the gifts of all the people of God for the good of the Church and the world. However, due credit must be given to those members of the hierarchy, who over many years, have been trying to facilitate that change. The *aggiornamento* of Vatican II would not have been possible had not so many bishops responded positively to the working of the Holy Spirit. As McEnroy records ‘while the tide was turning in Rome in regards to ecumenism and the laity as an essential part of a total ecclesiology, laity themselves, especially women, could not have scaled the Aurelian Wall without assistance from the inside.’⁶ Cardinal Suenens was prominent among these supporters within the institution. He made an intervention in the debate on *Lumen Gentium* in 1963 to remind the Fathers that ‘systematically excluding women from active Church participation made no sense in an age when they go almost to the moon.’⁷ Suenens also personally

⁴ Francis, Speech, accessed February 02, 2015, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/18pope_francis_speech_at_the_conclusion_of_the_synod/1108944.

⁵ Francis, *La Stampa* interview, December 10, 2013, Casa Santa Martha, Vatican, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/12/14/esteri/vatican-insider/en/never-be-afraid-of-tenderness-5BqUfVs9r7W1CJIMuHqNel/pagina.html>.

⁶ McEnroy, *Guests in their Own House*, 34.

⁷ Ibid., 35.

approached Paul VI, asking him to remove the ban on the *auditoras* receiving communion from the Pope.⁸

The research studies in Anglosphere nations on the participation of women that were authorised by Bishops' Conferences clearly reflect both interest and support from these bishops. The research also records the improvements and new openness in the years after Vatican II towards involvement of the laity that testifies to the way in which the effects of the council had begun to permeate the local Churches. However, in recent years, there seems to have been a retrenchment, including a gradual demise of many of the structures introduced to encourage collaborative ministry. Most of the Vatican II bishops are no longer in place because of retirement or death. Given subsequent developments in the attitude of the Church's leadership, it was inevitable that some of their replacements are bishops with different perspectives about the role of the laity. John Paul II appointed many of the current bishops, and they are in tune with his thinking. Pope Francis has spoken quite openly and forcefully about the need to 'raise the sights' when selecting candidates for the episcopacy. He called for the appointment of 'kerygmatic' men of authenticity who exhibit professionalism, dedication to others and holiness of life.⁹ This augurs well for a return to openness and collaboration although it will take time.

In the eyes of secular society, little may seem to have changed in the Church. The media have no problem in finding plenty of examples of persisting dysfunctional, archaic, misogynist perceptions within the institution to expose to public scrutiny. Indeed, even Nigel Baker, the UK Ambassador to the Holy See, could blog on the Foreign Office website that

the public face of the Holy See, and the Roman Catholic Church, remains predominantly male. Stating that is not meant to be a criticism, but it is a fact. I wonder whether the Holy See is doing all it might to mobilize this great resource, Catholic women worldwide?¹⁰

⁸ Leon Josef Suenens, *Memories and Hopes* (Dublin: Veritas, 1992), 140.

⁹ Francis, 'Address to Congregation for bishops' (Vatican: February 27, 2014), http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/february/documents/papa-francesco_20140227_riuione-congregazione-vescovi.html.

¹⁰ Nigel Baker, 'Women at the Holy See', March 08, 2013, <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/nigelbaker/2013/03/08/women-at-the-holy-see/>?

The Vatican needs to counter this negative reporting with positive promotion of the great work that is being done, by women and men around the world in the Church's name, as the examples in the Anglosphere research findings suggest.

Amongst the documents released to the press in the *Vatileaks* debacle of 2012, the Vatican correspondent for the *Tablet* newspaper identified as particularly significant a letter to Benedict XVI from the dedicated Dutch Catholic philanthropists Hubert and Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhan. In November 2011, they felt compelled to write to the Pope to express their concern that many intelligent and committed laity across Europe were growing increasingly disillusioned with the hierarchy. The Dutch couple emphatically stated:

Why are leading officials in the Vatican ruled by a paralyzing fear rather than collaboration with well-educated, competent, and open-minded Christians, of both sexes, and in every department, in order to honestly address the truly urgent questions of today and try to resolve them?¹¹

The question raised by Hubert and Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhan resonates with the views expressed by many participants in the various research projects summarised in chapter three and four.

As we have seen, Vatican II represented an attempt by the Church to address contemporary issues in the light of faith, and to turn the ecclesial focus from '*ad intra*' to '*ad extra*', that is, to overcome a sense of self-absorption and the petrification of doctrinal development. However imperfect the conciliar documents, shaped as they were by the desire for consensus and unanimity, they still created, in an oblique manner, a pathway back to the core tradition of the Church of Christ. Henri De Lubac would argue that, just as the Council addressed a time of crisis in the Church and world, so every age is confronted with crisis, understood as turning points, times of opportunity for growth and development.¹² What has been perceived to be crisis in the Church today could in fact simply be a fortuitous moment to examine the status quo. Listening to, and reflecting on, people's experiences, as exemplified in the research findings presented here, could enable brave considerations of new ways to respond to human concerns.

¹¹ Robert Mickens, 'Dear Holy Father', *The Tablet*, June 9, 2012, 6.

¹² Henri De Lubac, *The Eternal Feminine* (London: Collins, 1971), 140.

As we discovered in the Anglosphere research considered earlier, particularly that from the US, listening to the opinions and experiences of the laity could be both disturbing and enlightening for the clergy. Nonetheless, for the Church to truly develop as the People of God efforts must be made to understand women's diversity of gifts and integrate these into all areas of the Church's mission.

Just women

The Scots proverb: 'A woman's good either for something or nothing' sums up a masculine attitude which, as ecclesiastical structures are administered by men, has tended to be the historical approach to the participation of women in Church as in society. Men, and sometimes also women, often make sweeping generalisations about women as a whole gender. 'Woman' becomes a term that stands for an all-embracing ideal. The women's movements, in their different incarnations, attempted to refute this abstract concept of womanhood.

However, they also muddled the waters by their own circumscribed characterisations, often based solely on white, educated, middle-class values and experiences. It would seem that the women's movements' efforts to gain equal opportunities for women in society have proved largely successful in the Western world, as evidenced by the ratification of widespread human rights and employment legislation. However, the reality of life for many women is that even today there is equality neither in the workplace nor in the home. Instead of women being freed from the entire demands of home and family by a sharing of the responsibilities with their men-folk, most women now have to combine care responsibilities with career ones too. Indeed, women in the western context, with increasing human longevity, face even more demands, as the care needs of their children are augmented by the care needs of elderly relatives. The 2013 research in Scotland shows that Scottish women often also contribute large amounts of time and energy to help parishes to function. A greater acceptance of the equal dignity and co-responsibility of men and women in every aspect of human living would ease the burden on women and allow them time and opportunity to discover and use their talents.

Feminist theology underwent the same developmental process as secular feminism: expanding perspectives beyond those of white, Anglo Saxon,

educated, middle class women to include black, Latina and Asian women.¹³ The exclusive focus of the theology of Mary Daly and her compatriots on women's experience was interrogated, and found to be limited and incomplete. Daly opened up new challenges to patriarchy and misogyny but in her professed disinterest in men and her refusal to teach them, fell into the same trap of exclusivity and gender bias that she was vocal in decrying. Identifying the structures, images and language that oppress women was helpful, reconstituting these same elements from solely a women's perspective merely reversed the problem rather than providing a solution.¹⁴ The inclusion of theological reflection from women with very different ethnic, cultural and faith experiences from across the globe opened up completely new areas for study. This enhanced consciousness also brought a new awareness of the need to balance liberation with inclusivity and dialogue. Rather than merely rejecting all that had been discerned to be misogynist or paternalistic, there were efforts to engage in debate with men and women holding different perspectives, to find criteria for Church reform that were truly equitable and just. I agree with Anne Patrick's description of a feminist as a person who is totally convinced of the equality of women and men, and because of that conviction is committed to working for reform of any system or attitude in Church or society, which does not foster a culture for this equality to flourish.¹⁵ Moreover, I believe this thesis evidences the validity of this definition. Indeed, the majority of the respondents to the 2013 Scottish survey, laymen and clerics as well as women, would qualify as feminists under this definition. These people do not believe that either gender should be superior or dominant. Instead, they want to discern interventions and directions, as Simone de Beauvoir advocated, that would allow women and men to build relations of reciprocity both within the Church and society.¹⁶

In contrast to this Christian feminism is the 'new feminism' advocated by John Paul II, which defined the role of women in the transformation of culture

¹³ Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'The development of Feminist Theology', *Feminist Theology*, Vol. 20:3, May (2012): 185-189.

¹⁴ Many feminist theologians were critical of Daly's radical stance - e.g. Rosemary Radford Ruether's book review 'Theology by Sex', *New Republic* 169:19, November 10, (1973): 24-26.

¹⁵ Anne E. Patrick, 'Authority, Women and Church: Reconsidering the Relationship' in *Empowering Authority: the Charisms of Episcopacy and Primacy Today*, ed. Patrick Howell et al., (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 18.

¹⁶ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Picador, 1988), 740.

through what he saw as their feminine originality.¹⁷ The promotion of a new model was intended to offset the dangers which John Paul II perceived to be present in ‘old feminism’, such as the usurping of male behaviours and power structures by some women to the detriment of what John Paul II identified as their feminine ‘genius’ and specificity.¹⁸ Many Catholic theologians and women have embraced the teaching of John Paul II and used it to promote ‘authentic Catholic womanhood’, particularly in the USA. Thus in 2013, Archbishop Chaput of Philadelphia hosted a conference for Catholic Women in his archdiocese on the theme: ‘The feminine genius: Every woman’s gift’. He gave credit to the ‘national, and now international, ministry’ of the group Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women (ENDOW), which, he said had been founded to develop the ‘vision of a new Christian feminism’ as proposed by Pope John Paul.¹⁹ In this way, this ideology has become a movement.

Apart from John Paul’s writing on women, a key influence on these ‘new feminists’, has been his theology of the body, laid out in a series of sermons preached during his Wednesday papal audiences in the Vatican, between 1979 and 1984.²⁰ This series comprised 129 sermons, and has generated a plethora of commentaries, seminars, and academic papers, with Institutes and organisations around the world dedicated to exploring his teaching.²¹ Of relevance to this research is its impact on some women, who saw in feminism such negative connotations that they embraced this new ideal with fundamentalist fervour. For instance, Fiorella Nash, an advocate of the new feminism, accused ‘radical feminism’ of a ‘demonic parody of the theology of the body’ because of what she viewed as its antipathy to feminine nurturing and self-giving.²²

This criticism reflected a concern in some quarters of the hierarchy that liberating women from any marginalisation and oppression would lead to a subsequent devaluation of their capacity for self-giving and nurture. A number of prominent Catholic women, such as Mary Ann Glendon, have written

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 10.

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 99.

¹⁹ Charles Chaput, ‘The Feminine Genius - A Conference That Shouldn’t Be Missed’ *Zenit* 15/11/2013, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/the-feminine-genius>.

²⁰ Fiorella Nash, ‘Time for a New Feminism?’, *Faith Magazine* (2009), <http://www.laici.va/content/dam/laici/documenti/donna/culturasocieta/english/time-for-a-new-feminism.pdf>.

²¹ <http://www.theologyofthebody.net>.

²² Pat Gohn, *Blessed Beautiful and Bodacious: Celebrating the Gift of Catholic Womanhood* (Notre Dame, In: Ave Maria Press, 2013).

passionately in defence of John Paul's position, and, while accepting that women had experienced historical injustices, praised the 'striking changes' implemented to increase women's participation in the Catholic Church.²³

Glendon cites the example of the many women in senior positions in Catholic schools, health and social care projects, and the Church's constant promotion of female education.

Another approach has been 'authentic femininity', this 'Catholic apostolate' seeks to 'transform the world one woman at a time'.²⁴ Its adherents include Genevieve Kineke, an author and speaker who for over twenty years has been engaged with these questions, and who has been invited to speak at the Vatican. She believes that the development of authentic femininity has been necessary to permit 'the restoration of women to their proper dignity'.²⁵

It is because of the Church's awareness of the deep faith lives of women that the Pontifical Council of the Laity has a specific Women's Section. This is currently headed by Ana Cristina Villa Betancourt. Its web page describes its function clearly:

The Section strives to advance ideas and activities that can contribute to the dignity and vocation of women in the Church and in society... Together with an ad hoc group of experts, the women's section is also involved in a study on the man-woman relationship under the headings of specific identity, reciprocal interaction and mutual complementarity.²⁶

The balance of viewpoints within this *ad hoc* group is unclear, its members are not named, and it therefore cannot be ascertained whether it is truly representative of the wide spectrum of Catholic women. These questions have also been raised by others, including the Brenninkmeijer-Werhans who asked Benedict XVI why offices of the Holy See, such as the Council for the Family, 'use collaborators that are compliant and uncritical instead of employing people that can and want to act according to the spirit and demanding directives of Vatican II concerning the *aggiornamento* that was called for?'²⁷ It is to be hoped that under Pope Francis, a new spirit of inclusivity might broaden the

²³ Mary Ann Glendon, 'The Pope's New Feminism', *Crisis* 15, no. 3, (March 1997): 28-31, <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/feminism/fe0004.html>.

²⁴ Women of Grace, <http://www.womenofgrace.com/en-us/default.aspx>, see also <http://endowgroups.org>.

²⁵ Genevieve Kineke, *The Authentic Catholic Woman* (Cincinnati OH: Servant Books, 2006), 3.

²⁶ <http://www.laici.va/content/laici/en/sezioni/donna/profilo.html>.

²⁷ Robert Mickens, 'Dear Holy Father ... Yours devotedly', *The Tablet*, June 9, 2012, 6.

membership of all Vatican departments to include more women, from all backgrounds.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL) understood that it had to relate new scientific advances and cultural developments to its understanding of anthropology. In 2008, it therefore hosted a conference on ‘Woman and Man: the Humanum in its entirety’, to mark the twentieth anniversary of *Mulieris Dignitatem*. In his address to the congress, Benedict XVI explained the Church’s need to deepen its understanding ‘not only of the feminine identity but also the masculine, which is often the object of partial and ideological reflections.’²⁸ This consideration of men and women together boded well, especially as there was acknowledgement that a ‘masculine mentality’ still prevailed in many cultures where ‘women are discriminated against or undervalued for the sole fact of being women.’²⁹

Cardinal Rylko, the President of the PCL, however, stated as aim the refutation of trends such as ‘radical feminism’ and gender ideology.³⁰ Attacking what was perceived to be a culture of relativism, the PCL sought to support study that would counter these arguments by appealing to the ‘new feminism’ called for by John Paul II.³¹ In total, 280 delegates from 49 countries gathered in Rome. They heard five lectures and then joined in panel discussions on the role and mission of women and the problems they encountered in contemporary society.³² Rylko asserts that at the conference ‘the postmodern world was judged severely but not acrimoniously’.³³ Attention was not given to the many positive developments for women’s lives globally; rather, the focus was on what the institutional Church deemed the negative deconstruction of the richness and uniqueness of femininity.³⁴

Despite this exclusivity, the papers presented at these conferences did contain insights that were valued by a wide range of women. Angela Ales Bello, Lecturer

²⁸ Benedict XVI, ‘Foreword’ in *Woman and Man: the Humanum in its entirety*, Pontifical Council of the Laity (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁰ Stanislaw Rylko, ‘Address’ in *Woman and Man: the humanum in its entirety* Pontifical Council of the Laity (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 7.

³¹ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 99.

³² Rylko, ‘Address’ in *Woman and Man: the humanum in its entirety*, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, ‘Address’ in *Woman and Man: the humanum in its entirety*, 18.

at the Lateran University in Rome, gave a paper considering 'The Feminine question in Edith Stein, elements of a dual anthropology' in which she reviewed the process of the women's movement, seeking emancipation and developing feminism. Taking a balanced approach, she highlighted the fact that feminism was in essence not one movement but rather made up of different groups with different perspectives, although ultimately all were concerned with equality and human rights. Ales Bello equated feminism with secular, liberal ideologies, while she sees women's movements more generally as retaining a religious dimension.³⁵ She also argued that some of the more extremist expressions and aggressive attitudes of the feminist movement are understandable, arising as they did from a new awareness of oppression and the realization of the historic and often systemic devaluation of women. Ales Bello's position was echoed by Lisa Sowle Cahill who argued that Catholic feminist theology represents a movement beyond a focus on the liberation of women from oppression to a consideration of a fully human moral agenda, which also includes the well-being of men. Cahill, like Ales Bello, advised feminist theologians to focus their calls for reform within a context of justice and equity.³⁶ These perspectives resonate with the research findings on the participation of women in the Church, in which respondents identified gender equality and social justice as crucial factors.

Another speaker at the PCL conference was Maria Antonia Bel Bravo, a lecturer in Modern History from Spain. Bel Bravo called for a recovery of feminine culture and experience. Her research had shown an emphasis on the masculine sphere in history and a subsequent one-sided presentation of male influence that ignored the equally influential generations of women. Bel Bravo used the example of St Thomas More's wife Alice who, in answer to his rebuke that she should see to her family, was adamant that her avid interest in politics was part of her care for her home and family. For Bel Bravo, this highlighted the reality that for women 'there are no divisions' between social and familial roles and

³⁵ Angela Ales Bello, 'The Feminine question in Edith Stein, elements of a dual anthropology' in Pontifical Council of the Laity, *Woman and Man: the Humanum in its entirety*, (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 169.

³⁶ Lisa Sowle Cahill, 'Feminist Ethics', *Theological Studies*, Volume 51, (March 1990): 50.

responsibilities.³⁷ This awareness is something that I would suggest should extend to participation in Church life too.

Bel Bravo's position stands in marked contrast to that of Kineke, who on her website in 2014 included a column dedicated to 'Feminist lies'. According to Kineke:

While all cultures are in need of healing and purification, the changes brought by feminism were often more toxic than the harms they addressed. In this series, I will address the lies at the heart of feminism, which provided a corrosive element beneath the lofty rhetoric.³⁸

Such strong language hints not only at a dichotomy among Catholic women, evidenced in the research findings presented above, but also a potential impasse between those women who consider themselves feminists in, what Kineke would term, the radical sense, and those who do not. However, Michelle Schumacher suggests that not all advocates of the new feminism are as exclusive as Kineke: some do give credit to many aspects of traditional feminism. There is awareness that if they are highlighting the need to be relational and open to others as a key factor of their approach then they should engage in dialogue and listen sympathetically to women with different views rather than simply condemn them.³⁹ Catholic women, including both new feminists and ageing radicals, as well as those in between, might find common ground in Nicola Slee's observation that faith is an integral and defining element of many women's lives. It is this faith that enables them to comprehend and deal with all that daily human living brings their way.⁴⁰ Perhaps this shared commitment to being Church could create the neutral space to begin a conversation.

The PCL has organised other conferences, including one in 1996 on 'The Logic of Self-giving' and another in 2004 on 'Men and Women: Diversity and Mutual Complementarity'. Whatever the title, the underlying focus seems to have remained the same, perhaps because of the common constituency of those who

³⁷ Maria Antonia Bel Bravo, 'Christianity and the advancement of Women, Introduction' in *Woman and Man: the Humanum in its entirety*, Pontifical Council of the Laity (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2010), 160.

³⁸ Genevieve Kineke, 'Feminist Lies', accessed January 17, 2014), <http://femininegenius.com/index.cfm?load=page&page=311>.

³⁹ Michele M. Schumacher, *Women in Christ*, (Grand Rapids Mi: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), xv.

⁴⁰ Nicola Slee, *Women's Faith Development* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004), 164.

were invited as participants, or perhaps imposed by those who organised them. For example, the PCL Women's Section also organised a study seminar in 2013: 'God entrusts the human being to the woman', attended by over a hundred women from twenty-four countries, to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of John Paul II's apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*. At the same time, Tina Beattie writing in an article motivated by Pope Francis' call for a new theology of women questioned whether the PCL was missing the opportunity really to listen to women. Beattie was concerned that the invitations to such seminars were extended only to women who oppose feminism and gender theory and whose theology is centred on John Paul II's perception of women as equal but special.⁴¹

At the 2013 conference, the PCL acknowledged the change of culture and attitudes over the quarter of a century since the publication of *Mulieris Dignitatem*. It acknowledged that sexual difference was still a major issue for the Church, and that this placed it in opposition with the views of society. Regarding sexual difference, the report states:

Christ's disciples have to deal with this while avoiding the distorted lenses of the dominant ideologies... It follows the logic of complementarity of being rather than of doing. It avoids the seeking of power according to worldly standards, and it is not captured by the anti-logic of victimisation or competition.⁴²

This seems to refute a feminist understanding of complementarity as the sharing of diverse gifts, seen not as gender bound, but rather as part of personal identity. Donna Orsuto however, reflected at the same seminar that the formation of women is an important task if women are to become fully aware of their vocation and dignity as persons. Orsuto advocated the need for a strategy to ensure that 'it would become normative that women and men, exercising their complementary gifts, might work together to find creative ways to deal with problems facing our Church and world'.⁴³

⁴¹ Tina Beattie, 'Theology that hears the poor', *The Tablet*, October 12, 2013, 10.

⁴² Pontifical Council of the Laity, 'Conference report', http://www.laici.va/content/laici/en/eventi/seminari-e-congressi/dio-affida-l_essere-umano-alla-donna/100-donne-in-vaticano.html.

⁴³ Donna Orsuto, 'Seminar on *Mulieris Dignitatem*' (2013), <http://www.laici.va/content/dam/laici/documenti/donna/Dioaffidalessereumanoalladonna/participants/Donnapercent20Orsuto.pdf>.

These sentiments would tally with suggestions made by all the respondents to the 2013 Scottish research. Many respondents also indicated that they felt that the credibility of the institutional Church is at stake over its gender inequality. The Church cannot defend and promote women in its internal teaching, nor can it in public statements advise behavioural change in others, for example at the United Nations, if it is not seen authentically to practise what it preaches. Lucetta Scaraffia has argued that it is the organisation, which is misogynistic, rather than individuals in that by excluding women from leadership positions the Church perpetuates the sense of women as inferior.⁴⁴ This is a serious criticism that I suggest the institutional Church needs to address. The inclusion of women at every level, including significant leadership positions, would correct this discrimination. So too, would promotion of the historical contribution of women to the Church. This is not a new insight: in 1985, Edward Schillebeeckx wrote that the 'discontent' of women and the situation of blatant gender inequality was not only unbalancing the Church but was also the single issue most likely to challenge the credibility of the Church in society. He was sure that the inclusion of women was inevitable, no matter how much the hierarchy tried to resist change and that, when women were fully involved, the very face of the Church would alter and reflect the whole of humanity, as it should.⁴⁵

The research presented above has demonstrated that the opinion that the inherent exclusivity in Church praxis needs to be resolved is held not just by feminists, but also by bishops, priests, laymen and women who would not self-identify as feminists, all of whom believe that the greater participation of women, and a widening of roles for all the laity, would enhance the Church. In addition, most participants in the Scottish research would be in agreement with Edmund Flood's assessment that the divisions and animosity which pervade secular society have no place within any community that calls itself Christian.⁴⁶ However, this is not to advocate uniformity or suppression of differences of opinion; rather it opposes conflict and discord, and promotes dialogue and active listening to others. The Church needs to find ways to include the

⁴⁴ Lucetta Scaraffia, 'We need to win women back', *The Catholic Herald*, November 05, 2013, www.catholicherald.co.uk/features/2013/11/05/lucetta-scaraffia-we-need-to-win-women-back/.

⁴⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1985), 239-240.

⁴⁶ Cf. Edmund Flood, *The Laity Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 104.

multifarious, but equally valid and informative, experiences and perceptions of men and women, not only into its language and symbolism, but also more importantly into its ministry, both within the Church and its mission to the world. With Thomas Rausch, I believe that this is the 'most radical challenge to the status quo in the Church and one that will continue to cause alienation and frustration unless it is addressed directly, fully, and soon.'⁴⁷

Inspired by Vatican II, yet frustrated by the lack of implementation of its teaching, some Catholic women have voted with their feet and disengaged from Church life. However, in the context of this study, the majority of women seeking change still felt that the Church was where they belonged, so for them it was a case of defecting in place, that is working for reform from within the tradition. Miriam Winter emphasises that women who take this approach do so 'not as they were, but as they are', that is, as critically reflective women committed to participation in the life and mission of the Church, as opposed to meekly accepting the status quo as immutable.⁴⁸ The growth in feminist theology has been part of this process: as women's perspectives were applied to scriptural exegesis and doctrinal analysis, a more rounded and complete Christian understanding developed. Rosemary Radford Ruether, one of the pioneering theologians who helped shape new ways women could develop spiritually and be Church, urged a move away from paternalism and into a more equitable appreciation of the gifts of every person. A common structure for feminist theology has been to treat women's experience as the defining norm, yet this posed the danger of being partial. That is, whose experience did they relate this to, out of a myriad of different experiences of women? Feminist theology also still needed a correlation between human experience and divine revelation. Francis Martin identified the 'hermeneutical spiral' in which the evolving development in human knowledge and understanding and the truths of faith are, as Martin describes, 'mutually modified'.⁴⁹ This seems to me capable of producing the merging of faith and reason that would better enable women

⁴⁷ Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism in the Third Millennium* (2nd edition) (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 220.

⁴⁸ Miriam Therese Winter, 'Feminist Women's Spirituality: Breaking New Ground in the Church' in *The Church Women Want*, ed. Elizabeth Johnson, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), 31.

⁴⁹ Francis Martin, *The Feminist Question* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 173.

and men to ‘know the truth’, as John Paul II phrased it, both about themselves and about God.⁵⁰

The extremes of women’s liberation, which excluded positive relations with men and sought merely a reversal of power and position, have permeated feminist theology too, in some cases producing an isolationist approach rather than one that places women within the Church alongside men. In response I suggest that an application of Catholic social teaching principles would hone in on the equal dignity and value of every person and the need to balance rights with responsibilities. This could produce a receptive feminism, allowing women to contribute their insights and experiences to a productive conversation with each other, and with men. Listening to, and learning from each other will facilitate a deepening understanding of the human person and could be the seedbed for relationships that can replace dominance and power with collaboration and service.

This receptive feminism could also be a tool in a counter-cultural movement of women’s empowerment in the Church. The Catholic culture of the Anglosphere has in the past encouraged the education of women, forming them through contact with inspiring female teachers, both Religious and lay. While opportunities to use their gifts within the faith community may have been limited, the vision given to modern Catholic women was not. In England this ‘alternative civil society’, as Julie Clague has described it, or the ‘thick community’ that Anna Rowlands relishes, nurtured female theologians like them and many other professional laywomen of their era.⁵¹ Many respondents to the 2013 survey record similar experiences in Scotland from earlier decades that has equipped and empowered dynamic Catholic women to be a force for change, throughout their lives. Age is also a factor here: maturity brings with it a disregard for trivialities and the vacillations of fashion that constrain younger people. Awareness that the time ahead is less than the life already lived, concentrates the mind and energy on what really matters. Laity and clergy could learn much from the life experiences and wisdom of the older women who are the main constituents of our worshipping communities. The Catholic cultural

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 1.

⁵¹ Anna Rowlands, ‘In praise of a hidden tradition of Catholic women’s empowerment’, *The Tablet Blog*, December 14, 2012, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/blogs/424/17>.

landscape may have changed dramatically since Vatican II but the presence of these generations of women, many qualified and galvanised for service, would seem to me to predicate the real possibility of transformation in our time. All that is necessary is the goodwill of the hierarchy to unleash the talent in our communities.

No discussion of womanhood would be complete without mentioning the debt owed by Catholic women, in particular, to generations of Religious Sisters. Their contribution to the Church and to society has been enormous and needs to be given due credit. The feisty, inspirational, intelligent women who were the Foundresses of orders often had to battle against prejudice within and outside of the Church. They were often shunned or even exiled by the Church institution they dedicated their lives to serving. However, their perseverance and fidelity to the vocation they embraced enabled them to achieve great things against all the odds. Today Catholic women are able to study theology, take on pastoral and liturgical ministries, and develop their spiritual lives because of the female Religious who blazed the trail for them. Indeed, even within the lay Church reform movements and groups focused on justice and peace issues, female Religious were to the fore.⁵²

Much has been made of the Vatican investigation of the Religious in the US in recent years, but how many, or how few, people have heard of the Call to Accountability campaign of 2001? This was instigated in response to the reports compiled by Sr. Maura O'Donohue MMM in 1995 and Sr. Marie McDonald MSOLA in 1998, regarding the sexual abuse of female Religious by clergy in 23 countries, particularly Africa.⁵³ Both the Vatican investigation in the US and the Call to Accountability have a bearing on this thesis as they illustrate a disparity of attitude towards issues concerning women and men by the institutional Church. I share the sense of disappointment expressed by many research participants that the hierarchy focuses on women as a problem to be solved, rather than as part of the solution to the Church's problems.

⁵² Cf. Angela Bonavoglia, *Good Catholic Girls* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 27.

⁵³ Marie McDonald, 'Paper on the sexual abuse of African Religious in Africa and Rome' *National Catholic Reporter* (Posted March 09, 2001), http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/documents/McDonaldAFRICAreport.htm.

There is real need for Religious women and laywomen to engage in dialogue and to support each other. Those Orders which are currently experiencing few new vocations, should consider ways of handing on their charisms and responsibilities to laywomen. This would not negate the past but rather provide continuity for the future. Indeed, many congregations of Religious women have already discerned a place for lay associates: men and women who pray and work together with the Sisters.

Religious women also provide an exemplar for a renewed appreciation of lifelong learning within the Church among clergy and laity. The achievements of the Sisters, witness to the wisdom of availing themselves of every opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills. They also, in their adaptations to the modern world, model a fidelity to the Council's call to *ressourcement*, rejecting the security of what was known and being willing to take a leap of faith into new possibilities. After Vatican II, Religious women prayed and reflected on the charisms of their orders, and the reasons for their foundations, which often reflected the particular needs of a specific time and place. They then considered the contemporary signs of the times and where necessary made changes, sometimes drastic, to better equip themselves for service to others. In leadership and the governance of their orders, Religious women too exhibited a clear adherence to the spirit of Vatican II. After discernment and consultation, they replaced authoritarian models with more collegial and communitarian leadership styles. These forms of leadership have proved effective as well as affirming for the Sisters in their communities. I suggest they also provide a paradigm that the Catholic hierarchy could utilise.

Like his namesake Pope Francis seems to see his mission as primarily to be a peacemaker, and in particular to hold the different factions in the Church in a creative and loving tension, as St Paul instructed: 'Do all you can to preserve the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace'.⁵⁴ This resonates with the findings across all the research into women's participation: a way must be found to hold together the different outlooks among Catholic women. Indeed, in his first official teaching document, Francis was clear that empathy and outreach are

⁵⁴ Ephesians 4:3.

crucial if people want to find personal integrity and fulfilment.⁵⁵ Perhaps his model of a *via media* can inspire Catholic women from different perspectives to respect each other and whether in parallel or in collaborative engagement, to use their many talents in tandem with men for the common good.

Development through dialogue

Sandra Schneiders is clear that the conversion, or *metanoia*, that Jesus taught was necessary to build the kingdom challenges both men and women. Women have to accept themselves as responsible adults, empowered by baptism to be responsible for the life of the Church. Men have to reject patriarchal positions of power, and respecting the equality of women, strive to work with them as an expression of what Schneiders calls the 'praxis of the reign of God'.⁵⁶ This entails conversation, opportunities to listen and learn from each other, and extends to dialogue between the clergy and laity too.

The feminist theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz reminds us, that 'culture is how humans construct reality'.⁵⁷ In the responses to the 2013 Scottish survey, it was not only the young people but also adults, including clergy, who stressed that modern culture expects equal treatment for men and women. In 1997, Cardinal Nguyen van Thuan echoed the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* 43 when his prayerful reflections led him to write that 'the most disastrous scandal of our time is the separation between the practice of religion within church buildings and the practice of religion outside in society'.⁵⁸ There is a common perception that any dichotomy between the preaching and praxis of the Church on the matter of the equality and dignity of every human person renders the institution as flawed, if not hypocritical, and irrelevant.

Within the daily existence of human lives, decisions are made, ideas are realised, principles are formulated, rules are established, and so it is there that the faith community must intervene to share the values of the gospel. Mercy Amba Oduyoye identifies a women's perspective of gospel culture as, one 'that

⁵⁵ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 9.

⁵⁶ Sandra M. Schneiders, *Women and the Word* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 70.

⁵⁷ Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, 'A Mujerista perspective on Gospel & Culture' in *Women's Perspectives - Articulating the Liberating Power of the Gospel*, Jean Stromberg, (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 9.

⁵⁸ Nguyen Van Thuan, *The road of hope: Thoughts of light from a prison cell*, (New City: 1997).

unveils and highlights the good news and makes it operative'.⁵⁹ I would argue that this is a view held by men too. If the faith communities are to be the 'leaven in the loaf' of the world, they need to ensure that culture is 'subordinated to the integral development of the human person, to the good of the community and of the whole of humankind'.⁶⁰

Contemporary research into equality in general society shows that gender inequality is a live issue not only for the Catholic Church. Many people are aware that there are still spheres of life and places in the world in which gender equality is only a hopeful dream. Recent research in the western world has not only served to highlight the discrepancies but also repudiated the popular myth that women can 'have it all': 'it' being career, motherhood, relationships etc. In January 2014, a report entitled *A Woman's Nation pushes back from the brink*, written by Maria Shriver, was published by the Center for American Progress (CAP).⁶¹ This report challenges the US administration on its support for the poor and the vulnerable and highlights the struggle of many American women to juggle family and work responsibilities. Neera Tanden, the President of CAP, stresses that these are not just 'women's issues': they impact negatively on the whole of society. CAP also emphasises that both attitudes and culture need to be changed if women are really to be supported and valued. This echoes the research findings on women in the Church: many respondents considered juridical developments to be ineffective without the equivalent paradigm shift in hearts and minds. Joan Chittister's comment on the Shriver report is astute: 'gender equity is the bog of gender equality': that is, legislation to promote gender equality may exist in many countries, as also in the Church, but wholehearted implementation of these ordinances is another matter.⁶²

History is an important part of culture. A revealing statistic related to the historical status of women in Scotland is that of the more than 200 statues in Edinburgh only two are of women: the same number as statues of dogs. Various female historians and women's groups therefore assert with Anna Schwoub that

⁵⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, 'Gospel & culture in Africa through Women's eyes' in *Women's Perspectives - Articulating the Liberating Power of the Gospel*, Jean Stromberg, (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 41.

⁶⁰ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 59.

⁶¹ Maria Shriver, *A Woman's Nation pushes back from the brink* (US: Rosetta Books, 2014).

⁶² Joan Chittister, 'Yes, but isn't it all over now', *National Catholic Reporter*, January 01, 2014, www.ncronline.org/blogs/where-i-stand/yes-isnt-it-all-over-now.

‘making women visible is a major issue in addressing gender inequality, gender injustice and gender-based violence in these islands and beyond’.⁶³ Indeed, the historian Lesley Orr found that on the rare occasions when women were mentioned in Scottish historical records, it was because they were ‘exceptions or deviants, queens or witches’.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, a priest respondent asserted in his survey submission:

*Scotland is a matriarchal society - thus the men may occupy the front benches of life, but it is the women who rule. The clue to running a parish in Scotland is to recognise the hidden power of the women folk ... women have more Church influence than they perhaps know.*⁶⁵

The Catholic Church in Scotland has the potential to contribute to the development of women’s participation in the universal Church, especially as the invisibility of women is disproved by their activity in the Church.

Learning from the past is indeed vital to both address present concerns and prepare for the future, as is often stressed in scripture. However, this should not be a meaningless attachment; rather it needs to be dynamic reconsideration of things in the light of new insights and experiences. Susannah Herzel, in her identification of a need for modern day prophets, suggests replacing the linear or chronological sense of time with a sense of time itself as ‘progressive prophetic vision’, in a spiral movement that sometimes needs to go backwards to move forward.⁶⁶ This should remove any fear of throwing out the old; rather it is through the old that new connections are made: the potentiality of the past is fulfilled in what comes after it. The implication is that there is a need for what Marie-Louise Ternier-Gommers has described as ‘pruning, testing, and transition’ to enable all the faithful to fully participate in the Church’s mission and ministry.⁶⁷

It is apparent from Church history that the status and role of women was more open and equitable in the early Christian communities than in the secular

⁶³ Anna Schwoub, *Women’s history of struggle in the spotlight*, accessed August 12, 2013, <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/blog/104769>.

⁶⁴ Lesley Orr MacDonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 2000), 2.

⁶⁵ Respondent 525.

⁶⁶ Susannah Herzel, *A Voice for Women* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981), 16.

⁶⁷ Marie-Louise Ternier-Gommer, *Catholic Women in Ministry* (Ottawa: Novalis Publishing Inc., 2007), 31.

societies to which they belonged. This was even though, as Paul advised the Thessalonians, they should ‘aspire to live quietly’ to be seen to be respectable to people outside the Church.⁶⁸ Christian groups held widows, considered then the lowest social caste in secular society, in esteem. Indeed, by the 3rd century there is evidence that some widows were given parity with Deaconesses, as part of the early Church hierarchy.⁶⁹ The example of Jesus’ acceptance and socialisation with women had obviously had effect. Yet, history is also unequivocal in recording the Church’s gradual conformity with secular society, which led to the role of women being devalued or, as Bonnie Bowman Thurston describes it, the Church’s ‘original social radicalism was lost’.⁷⁰ I would suggest that ecclesial renovation, which recovers this sense of radicalism, is not therefore rupture, but a continuum with the ministry of the earliest followers of Christ.

Similarly, continuity with the teaching of Vatican II can extend the roles and responsibilities of all the laity in our time, without any breach or revolutionary change of direction. As Sharon Euart and other Canon lawyers would argue, despite ‘inconsistent applications’ and some ‘ambiguities’ in the 1983 Code, ecclesial law fully supports greater lay participation in the Church.⁷¹ At a Symposium on lay ministry in the US in 2004, theologians and historians concurred with these findings, and their studies testify to the evidence of history that ministry in the Church has always been an evolving process.⁷² The early Christian communities also had to confront religious pluralism and diversity. Down the ages, in the light of differing social and political contexts, the Church had to adapt its structure and ministries to enable it to deliver its mission to the world effectively. Many developments, rather than imposed from any central authority, happened at local level in response to need, and then spread to be accepted everywhere. An early example of this was the decision by the apostles to appoint deacons, thus separating pastoral ministry from the ministry of

⁶⁸ 1 Thessalonians: 4: 11.

⁶⁹ Mary L. McKenna, *Women of the Church, Role and Revival* (New York: PJ Kennedy & Sons, 1967), 51. See also Charlotte Methuen, ‘Widows, bishops and the struggle for authority in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*,’ in: *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995): 197-213.

⁷⁰ Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A women’s ministry in the early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 19.

⁷¹ Sharon Euart, ‘Parishes Without a Resident Pastor’, *The Jurist* 54, (1994): 372.

⁷² Symposium papers published as: Richard Miller, (Editor) *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past* (Liguori Mi: Liguori Publications, 2004).

teaching and leading local churches.⁷³ The Old Testament sage had said that there was ‘nothing new under the sun’, and Church history attests this in the cyclic processes of change and development.⁷⁴ Far from the Church being a static immutable structure: the reforms of Vatican II are seen by many theologians as merely another stage in the dynamic process of the followers of Christ responding to the promptings of the Spirit.⁷⁵

Continuity means progression. Consequently, faithfulness to Tradition in the Church does not negate vitality; indeed, dictionaries define apathy and stoppage as the antonyms of continuity. The Anglosphere research presented here records many situations where forward thinking bishops and priests of the past encouraged inclusive liturgy and collaborative pastoral ministry, which has been dissipated in recent years, if not totally eradicated. Many survey respondents agreed with Kathleen McManus’ worrying assessment that this is down to the Church’s ‘deepening retrenchment, a retrenchment fuelled by a growing and increasingly youthful movement in neo-orthodox theology’⁷⁶(a theology which is in fact not orthodox at all but rather traditionalist). Tradition is the living faith of earlier generations while traditionalism is the opposite and what Paul Lakeland would describe as ‘the dead faith of the living’.⁷⁷ This aligns with Nicola Slee’s argument that for Christians there is no ‘fixed blueprint, either ideological or behavioural’.⁷⁸ Instead, our Tradition bears witness to a vital, mutable belief system: always responsive to the needs of the communities of Christian disciples, promoting gospel values that society often considered radical or even subversive.

Joan Chittister, in a recent article, drew attention to Boethius’ adage that every age that is dying is simply a new age coming to life.⁷⁹ Consequently, the decline that the western Church is experiencing now, need not be seen as crisis but as

⁷³ Acts 6: 1-6.

⁷⁴ Ecclesiastes 1:9.

⁷⁵ Richard Miller, (Editor) *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, Introduction, vii-xi.

⁷⁶ Kathleen McManus, ‘Fermenting Impasse’, *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 94, Issue 1052, (July 2013): 425-439.

⁷⁷ Paul Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 37.

⁷⁸ Nicola Slee, *Faith and Feminism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd. 2003), 116.

⁷⁹ Joan Chittister, ‘We are at a crossroads for women in the Church’, *National Catholic Reporter* online, December 11, 2013, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/where-i-stand/we-are-crossroads-women-Church>.

the opportunity for evolution, and different methods of engagement. Jesus challenged the Pharisees who carried their fidelity to tradition to extremes, and when they accused him of lawlessness, he was unequivocal that like the Sabbath, laws were made to serve humanity, not the other way round.⁸⁰ Therefore, when confronted with current dilemmas about the best way to proceed to make the Church all that it should be, to ensure continuity, in the light of Tradition and Church teaching, the main consideration, is surely ‘what would Jesus do?’

Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria in the 4th century and a Doctor of the Church, is renowned for his persecution of the Arians who denied the divinity of Christ, but he was also an advocate of dialogue. His image of the Church is as a vast choir composed of women and men, old and young, a cacophony of voices, yet able to respond to the direction of the skilful conductor so that all the different tones come together to produce a beautiful, harmonious sound. For Athanasius, and for us today, this is a model for the Church: ‘by a single impulse of the will of God the Word everything is put together in order, each acting in its appropriate way, and all produce a single common order’.⁸¹ This commonality is not a blend but a collage of the individual contributions of each person. St Ignatius of Antioch used the same symphonic imagery in his preaching to the Ephesians about the unity of vision and purpose between bishops and priests as an iconic sign of the local Church. Today we have the global movements of priests advocating Church reform, and many public conflicts between hierarchy and clergy over theological writing or pastoral practice. I wonder how many of the clergy feel that they are, as Ignatius suggests they should be, ‘attuned to their bishop like the strings of a harp’?⁸²

The theologian Leonardo Boff wrote about the variety of attitudes active in those seeking to confront problems in the Church. The views of those Boff labels as ‘Catastrophists, Conservatives, Utopists, or Escapists’ are self-explanatory. Boff perceived these attitudes as flawed, searching for solutions in mere flights of fancy, into the past, or the future, or onto some esoteric plane. He believed

⁸⁰ Mark 2:27.

⁸¹ Discourse of St Athanasius against the Gentiles 42-43, Office of Readings, Friday Week 1 of year, *The Divine Office Volume 1*, (London: Collins, 1974), 402.

⁸² Letter of St Ignatius of Antioch to the Ephesians, 2,2-5,2, Office of Readings, Sunday Week 2 of year, *The Divine Office Volume 1*, (London: Collins, 1974), 410.

that only those with what he designated 'a responsible attitude' could develop answers, for only they were willing to:

Seek to strengthen the positive forces contained within the crisis, and formulate answers to problems. They do not reject the past simply because it is the past. They learn from the past as the repository of great experience that should not be wasted...they define themselves as being in favour of and not simply by being against. Nor do they waste their time in sterile polemics. They work and are profoundly committed to developing a model that corresponds to the needs of the time. They are open to criticism and self-criticism, always ready to learn.⁸³

In Scotland, John Bell, a prolific hymn-writer from the Presbyterian tradition, uses the lovely expression 'God's favourite colour is tartan' meaning that 'like tartan, we are only fulfilling our vocation to be the Church when one colour, one denomination does not predominate, but all complement each other'.⁸⁴ As well as communion between Churches we need communion within Churches, with each Christian, regardless of gender or vocation, being valued and fully participative. In the tapestry of life, many strands of events and experience weave together in each human existence, all of which are valuable, and which together make a beautiful design. Just as with the mandate to seek unity, Christians are also bound to recognise and value the gifts of every human person, remembering that humanity as Walter Kasper has said, is not singular but exists only in the 'dual version' of women and men.⁸⁵ Kasper assumes that there is an intrinsic partnership between women and men, which, if rightly developed, could allow both genders to fully participate in the life of the Church. Kasper urged the Church to strive to be the sacrament of unity for all humanity, and thus to fulfil what Vatican II had discerned to be its fundamental reason for existence, dispensing with its earlier 'unrealistic, one-sided and outmoded models, which excluded women'.⁸⁶

Lumen Gentium identified the Church as 'mystery': something that is beyond our understanding and grasp.⁸⁷ Yet, it is this mystery that, according to Jean Vanier, enables the Church to encompass the wide diversity of human persons in

⁸³ Leonardo Boff, 'Attitudes for confronting the current crisis', January 21, 2013, <http://www.weareChurch.blogspot.co.uk>.

⁸⁴ John L Bell, *Wrestle and Fight and Pray*, (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2003), 105.

⁸⁵ Walter Kasper, *Position of Women*, in *The Church and Women: A Compendium*, ed. Helmut Moll (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 58.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸⁷ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* Chapter 1.

their entire God-given singularity, and instils relationship among them, and with God.⁸⁸ The Church must develop a unity between persons that emulates the trinitarian life of God, understood as the perfect community. In the Trinity there is a *perichoresis*, which A. M. Allchin beautifully interprets as a relationship where each person gives place to the others, gives authority to the others, where authority is understood as the flow of truth from one person to another.⁸⁹ I suggest that this Trinitarian-like *communio* would allow the development of a community of disciples, Avery Dulles' sixth suggestion as a model of Church structure, where the flow of truth enables the discernment of the *sensus fidelium*.⁹⁰

The Scottish Civic Forum consultation on human rights in Scotland in 2002 affirmed in its report that 'change happens when those who do not usually speak are heard by those who do not usually listen'.⁹¹ This resonates with the call of women, frequently heard in the research to have their opinions listened to by Church authorities. Recognising the sincerity and the process of discernment that underpins it, many clergy support opportunities to hear these feminine voices, even when they are critical, and would agree with Bernard Häring that 'our holy women are in the service of life.' In consequence Häring deduces from this: 'they are sharply opposed to its abortion. Then let the spirit of the Council not be aborted by men more concerned for law and order than for growing life'.⁹² Michael Holman reports that the 16th century Jesuit St Peter Faber shared this critique of the hierarchy: 'I grieve that our leaders busy themselves with trivialities; that highly gifted men are preoccupied with paltry nothings ... the first and foremost duty of the ministers of the Church is to feed the flock of Christ'.⁹³

Low morale among the clergy has arisen in part because they too feel ignored, by bishops who are not interested in their opinions. Bishops in turn have vocalised their frustration at having their opinions discounted by Vatican bureaucrats. There is, then, a need for the cultivation of a culture of listening

⁸⁸ Jean Vanier, *Sign of the Times* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2013), 127.

⁸⁹ A.M. Allchin, *A Fearful Symmetry* (London: SPCK, 1992), 28.

⁹⁰ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church Expanded Edition* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 195.

⁹¹ Scottish Civic Forum. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47032/0025611.pdf>.

⁹² Bernard Häring, Foreword in *Guests in their Own House: The Women of Vatican II*, Carmel McEnroy (New York: Crossroad Publishing 1996), x.

⁹³ Michael Holman, 'Nourishing hearts and informing minds', *The Tablet*, January 4, 2014, 4-5.

in the Church at every level, where all the people of God can develop what Donald Cozzens describes as ‘contemplative hearts’ able ‘to listen humbly and to speak bravely’.⁹⁴ John Paul II could write that ‘the capacity for “dialogue” is rooted in the nature of the person and their dignity ... Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization, the self-realization both of each individual and of every human community’.⁹⁵ This being the case, dialogue has to be a key tool for a faith community that seeks to help every human person reach fulfilment. The Church as a worldwide institution has the capacity to set the scene for a culture of listening and dialogue everywhere, to women, and to men. This is vital if we want to avoid what Joan Chittister describes as a Church ‘governed by one-half of the human heart, understood by only one-half of the human mind, and grown to only half the stature of the human soul’.⁹⁶

Pope Francis recognises both the demands of culture and the call of justice to recognise humanity as a whole people. He calls for dialogue that goes beyond ‘plans drawn up by a few for the few, or an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone’.⁹⁷ Valuing diversity, and respecting personal differences, Francis astutely suggests the model of a polyhedron rather than a circle because this ‘reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness’.⁹⁸ This is to transform dialogue from a listening exercise into the catalyst for positive improvement.

The days in which the institutional Church could think of itself complacently as an unequal society in which the laity had no role are long gone. Famously, Pope Pius X said: ‘the only duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the pastors’.⁹⁹ In the Anglosphere there is no question of this paternalistic situation ever being considered acceptable again. However, as one Missionary respondent to the 2013 survey cautioned, in some

⁹⁴ Donald Cozzens, *Faith that Dares to Speak* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 37

⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) 23, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html.

⁹⁶ Joan Chittister, *Women’s Role in the Church* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1993), 18.

⁹⁷ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (Apostolic Exhortation, 2013), 239. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁹⁹ Pius X, *Vehementer Nos* (1906) 8, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos_en.html.

other areas of the world where theological education is not so widespread there is still a danger of ‘unquestioning obedience to the priest, because “Father knows best”’.¹⁰⁰ This is not only to deny the *sensus fidei* of all the baptised, but is also dangerous in allowing a power structure to emerge which can have disastrous ramifications, as we have seen in clerical sex abuse and other exploitations of status.

In 2014, we experienced the novelty of a call from the Vatican for widespread consultation before the autumn’s Synod of Bishops deliberations on the subject of Marriage and the Family. In Pope Francis’ promotion of a new collegiality within the leadership surely there are also opportunities for this to be extended to the lay faithful. Although Synods are structures for episcopal debate and hierarchical decision-making, they could also be utilized as instruments for discerning the *sensus fidelium* and facilitating its reception.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the International Theological Commission has recently published a document, ratified by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the importance of this *sensus fidei* as both a personal and communal ecclesial reality. In line with the findings of this thesis the document states:

By means of the *sensus fidei*, the faithful are able not only to recognise what is in accordance with the Gospel and to reject what is contrary to it, but also to sense what Pope Francis has called ‘new ways for the journey’ in faith of the whole pilgrim people. One of the reasons why bishops and priests need to be close to their people on the journey and to walk with them is precisely so as to recognise ‘new ways’ as they are sensed by the people.¹⁰²

Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp hoped that the 2014 Episcopal Synod on the ‘Pastoral challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelisation’ would function as a test case for a new pastoral approach by the Church to all areas of human life. Bonny highlights the importance of the *sensus fidei* and affirms the necessity of dialogue if the Church wants to maintain its identity with Christ, and credibility within society.¹⁰³ At the Episcopal Synod, the bishops did listen

¹⁰⁰ Respondent 522.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Bradford Hinze, ‘The Reception of Vatican II in Participatory Structures of the Church: Facts and Friction’, *Canon Law Society of America Proceedings* 70 (2008): 28-52.

¹⁰² International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (2014) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html 127.

¹⁰³ Johan Bonny, ‘Synod on the Family: Expectations of a Diocesan Bishop’ (Translator Brian Doyle, Antwerp, September 01, 2014), 19. [pagehttp://kerknet.be/admin/files/assets/subsites/4/documenten/SYNOD_ON_FAMILY_ENG.pdf](http://kerknet.be/admin/files/assets/subsites/4/documenten/SYNOD_ON_FAMILY_ENG.pdf).

to short presentations by some laity, but priests and male religious, who are celibate men and whose expertise in marriage and family matters could be called into question, were responsible for all the debates and documents. The mid-term report, the *Relatio post disceptationem*, presented to the Synod on October 13, 2014, by Cardinal Péter Erdő, had an enlightened and compassionate tone. It suggested that, the ‘significant hermeneutic key’ used by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* 6 in regard to other Christian churches, could be utilised to recognise ‘positive elements’ in ‘the imperfect forms’ that may be found outside the sacrament of marriage.¹⁰⁴ Reception of this document was dramatic, lauded by the media then attacked by many senior clergy. However, any hopes of radical change were quickly dissipated by the concluding *Relatio Synodi* document which reaffirmed: ‘the great values of marriage and the Christian family correspond to the search that characterizes human existence, even in these times of individualism and hedonism.’¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, the Synodal experience of free speech and dialogue resulted in some ill-tempered ripostes from episcopal participants who obviously felt threatened by opinions that were not identical to their own. It will be illuminating to monitor the progress of the debate in the Synod of October 2015.

Helen Bergin, in a recent article on the pneumatology of Vatican II, found in *Lumen Gentium* explicit references to the role of the Spirit in enabling the building and strengthening of the ‘structural bonds of ecclesial *koinonia*’.¹⁰⁶ I suggest that the teaching of the Council can offer a tool to facilitate dialogue across the institutional Church that can nurture the holistic growth and harmony necessary for the community of faith.

Formation for service

Every study considered in this dissertation comments on the need for ongoing, indeed lifelong, formation in order to support human fulfilment. This formation

¹⁰⁴ Synod 14: Full Text of *Relatio Post Disceptationem* 17, 18, accessed November 13, 2014, http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/synod14-full-text-of-relatio-post-disceptationem?utm_campaign=dailyhtml&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dispatch.

¹⁰⁵ III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization”, Vatican, October 5-9, 2014, *Relatio Synodi* 11, accessed November 05, 2014, <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/18/0770/03044.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Helen Bergin, ‘Feminist theologians and pneumatology: an enrichment of Vatican II’, *Australian eJournal of Theology* 21.2, August (2014): 157, cf. *Lumen Gentium* 22, 24, 25, 27.

could take many forms, including appropriate theological education, adult catechesis, and training in the skills necessary for collaborative working, dialogue, and community building. So how can we apply these research findings to the realities of the Scottish Catholic Church today?

One key facet which underlies this formation, has to be a Christian anthropological study that identifies the genius of both women and men, and finds ways to celebrate and utilise each person's unique gifts for the good of all. That is: an underlying principle will find in sexual difference what Sarah Butler calls 'an invitation to communion rather than competition.'¹⁰⁷ The *Imago Dei* present in each human person is a concept that is extolled by Catholic theology, yet the tradition has reflected an androcentrism that has resulted in the denigration of women. Rosemary Radford Reuther argues that an understanding of a 'full and equivalent human nature and personhood, as male and female' would foster gender equality, with both women and men being equally valued.¹⁰⁸ This equivalence does not mean sameness; rather it recognises the distinctiveness of each individual in personhood as well as gender. Within the laity are men and women, who have the potential to be equally theologically qualified, and equally gifted and skilled in pastoral ministry. Participation in ecclesial leadership or ministry is not a right, but it should be a role equally open to those men and women who have been given by God talents and vocation.

A key focus for the bishops at Vatican II, and a finding in all the Anglosphere research, was the need for ongoing formation of priests. This has not yet come to fruition and is further threatened by the decreasing numbers of clergy in our nations. One clerical respondent in the Scottish survey attributed this simply to the fact that in the clergy '*are a lot of tired and aging men, without much go*'. His solution to this situation was that there was '*no reason for lay people, men and women, not to light a good, hot, blazing fire of the Spirit, so that others can catch fire, too*', suggesting clerical formation should be in collaboration with lay formation.¹⁰⁹ We are reminded that any faith formation should be spiritual as well as academic. The Church has experts in spiritual formation in

¹⁰⁷Sarah Butler, 'Embodiment: Women and Men, Equal and Complementary' in *The Church Women Want*, Elizabeth Johnston (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), 42.

¹⁰⁸ Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Sexism and God Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 1983), 111.

¹⁰⁹ Respondent 114.

the female Doctors of the Church, from whom both clergy and laity could learn: each lived out her theology in lives that Eva Carlota Rava would equate with the 'radical simplicity of Jesus and his teaching'.¹¹⁰ I suggest that providing more opportunities for formation for women would result in a body of formators who could inspire and educate a new generation of clergy and laity.

The 1990 Synod of Bishops took forward Vatican II's concern for priestly formation:

Attention has shifted from the question of the priest's identity to that connected with the process of formation for the priesthood and the quality of priestly life. The new generation of those called to the ministerial priesthood display different characteristics in comparison to those of their immediate predecessors. In addition, they live in a world, which in many respects is new and undergoing rapid and continual evolution.¹¹¹

John Paul II advised his priests to reread the documents of Vatican II, so that they could understand better the role women had within the Church and thus realise, as he did, that 'women too, together with men, have a part in the prophetic mission of Christ. The same can be said of their sharing in his priestly and royal mission. The universal priesthood of the faithful and the royal dignity belong to both men and women'.¹¹² I could not find any research that records the response of the clergy to this particular papal admonition.

Catholic clergy, need to be encouraged and given the time and space to pursue further studies and training. This should not add to the burden of already busy priests, but should, as lay students have experienced, renew their energy and enthusiasm for their vocation, and re-inspire them for ministry. There are many fine examples of priests who have already understood this. For instance, Fr. David Oakley, through his studies, came to the conclusion that 'the issue of authority can only be understood within a Christological context of servanthood' and modelled his pastoral practice accordingly, encouraging greater lay participation in his parish.¹¹³ Without study and reflection ministry will become stale and lifeless and inertia will set in for the ministers. Moreover, as John

¹¹⁰ Eva Carlota Rava, 'A new way of being Doctors of the Church' in *Woman and Man: the Humanum in its entirety*, Pontifical Council of the Laity (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 227.

¹¹¹ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1991) 3.

¹¹² John Paul II, *Letter to Priests* (Vatican City: Holy Thursday 1995).

¹¹³ David J. Oakley, *Pastoral Ministry - An Essay in Pastoral Theology* (Durham: Pentland Books, 2001), 149.

Burkhard argues, there can be no categorical definition of the teaching Church as the clergy, and the learning Church as the province of the laity. Instead he suggests a *conspiratio* where Magisterium, theologians, and laity together mediate the *sensus fidelium*.¹¹⁴ I suggest that the Church, as people of God, can only thrive if all of the faithful - clergy and laity - both learn and teach. The most beneficial formation is that which is open to all, laity and clergy, learning with and from each other.

Here, we can learn from Catholic social teaching. Paulo Freire brought 'popular education' to Latin America and other countries of the South with a philosophy of education and development closely mirroring the 'See - judge - act' methodology of the Church's social teaching. The Catechism develops this, affirming that 'The Church's social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgement; it gives guidelines for action'.¹¹⁵ Freire understood that only such a social teaching could lead people to critical reflection and from there to appropriate action; a mentality that could lift them out of apathy and fear by giving them the truth, orthodoxy, and supporting them in the work that must be done, orthopraxis.¹¹⁶ He offers the solution of education or formation for all, regardless of age or gender:

Problem-posing education is prophetic, and as such is hopeful, corresponding to the historical nature of human beings. It affirms people as beings that transcend themselves: who move forward and look ahead... for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are, so that they can more wisely build the future.¹¹⁷

Freire clearly understood the importance of Catholic social teaching as a tool in integral human development. Within the Church the work of justice and peace groups is not only on making the principles of Catholic social teaching more widely known and understood, but also on encouraging Christians to put their faith into action for the common good. This sensitivity to issues of justice and peace is vital if the Church is to act as leaven in society, promoting a preferential option for the poor and marginalised, and being a constant catalyst

¹¹⁴ John Burkhard, 'Sensus Fidei: Theological reflection since Vatican II. I. 1965-1984', *The Heythrop Journal*, Volume 34, issue 1 January, (1993): 43, (published online April 29, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 2423.

¹¹⁶ Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, "A Dialogue: Culture, Language, and Race" in *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 65, no. 3, fall, (1995): 382.

¹¹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2nd Revised Edition, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 57.

for equity and integrity in human interaction. This is why Justice and Peace commissions in the Church are important: their roles as motivating agents in most of the Anglosphere research on the participation of women in the Church testify to this. Work for justice and peace is one of the many positive initiatives of the later decades of the twentieth century that has been devalued or dismantled in the Church as it has moved into the third millennium. Yet the Magisterium has taught since 1971 that this is not an optional extra for Christians: 'Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel.'¹¹⁸ A greater focus on action for social justice, within the Church as well as by the Church for the needs of the world, would automatically contribute to making gender inequality obsolete. Michael Muonwe, a Catholic priest from Nigeria, in his ongoing formation, not only focused on the question of interreligious dialogue so vital to peace and justice in his homeland, but also chose to research links between theology and feminist theory. Muonwe understood this to be essential to combating what he saw as 'the deadening structures of exclusion and sexism within the Church and the society that do not reflect the God of love in Jesus Christ'.¹¹⁹ Muonwe's example shows the benefit of investment in a greater promotion of Catholic social teaching in schools and parishes in the context of a catechesis that cohesively relates prayer with action, worship of God with service to humanity.

Women's gifts and strengths are a valuable source for the Church, particularly in the field of social justice. John Paul II identified this in 1995: 'When women are able fully to share their gifts with the whole community, the very way in which society understands and organizes itself is improved, and comes to reflect in a better way the substantial unity of the human family'.¹²⁰ Exploring this theme, John Paul II recognised *Gaudium et Spes* as the 'Magna Carta of human dignity' and in that same year, a Vatican Conference was held to reflect on the thirtieth

¹¹⁸ Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (Vatican, 1971) 6, accessed November 01, 2014, <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/synodjw.htm>.

¹¹⁹ Michael Muonwe, *Challenging the Myths of Gender Equality - Theology and Feminism* (Milton Keynes, UK: Xlibris LLC, 2014).

¹²⁰ John Paul II, 'World Day of Peace message' January 01, 1995, 9, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121994_xxviii-world-day-for-peace_en.html.

anniversary of its publication.¹²¹ In his presentation to the conference, Cardinal Daneels of Belgium spoke of lights and shadows, referring to the positive developments over the period since the Council and to the challenges, which still faced the Church. Among the shadows he saw the issue of the role of women, which he thought had not progressed as much as it should because it had been considered from the ‘standpoint of a logic of power’, a flawed interpretation that could only harm women as it had harmed men. While men engaged in reflection about what they thought of women, Daneels suggested, he himself was more interested in what God thought of women.¹²²

The origin of the term ‘laity’ lies in the Greek word *laos* meaning ‘all people’. However, this meaning was lost in the translation into the Latin *laici*, which assumed a negative connotation, referring to people who were simply ‘non clerics’. This distortion was also initially embedded in Canon law. Geoffrey Robinson considers the term ‘laity’ using the analogy of civilians as opposed to citizens: the former term only has relevance when the military are part of the equation. He shows that in reading Church documents about the laity, one becomes aware that the clergy are the fundamental point of reference.¹²³ This distorted perspective allows the institutional Church understood as the clergy, to address women, and also, though rarely, laymen, as if they were not already part of the Church. For example John Paul II wrote: ‘the Church desires to give thanks to the most Holy Trinity for the “mystery of woman”’.¹²⁴ This is a clear example of the way in which language can educate and liberate, or it can foster oppression or the sense of exclusion felt by many whose views informed the research presented in this thesis.

It is my contention that the proper application of the principles of Catholic social teaching would prevent any institutional injustice, and reaffirm the rights of all the baptised to full citizenship of the Church. There is a paradox in the institutional Church which on the one hand presents a vision of transformed

¹²¹ Pontifical Council for the Laity, ‘Gaudium et Spes: Thirty Years Later’, *Laity Today Review* 39, Vatican City, PCL, (1996): 3.

¹²² Godfried Daneels, ‘Gaudium et Spes: Between the Shadows and the lights of our times’ in Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Gaudium et Spes: Thirty Years Later*, *Laity Today Review* 39, Vatican City, PCL, (1996): 278.

¹²³ Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2007), 294.

¹²⁴ John Paul II, *Letter to Women 1, Mulieris Dignitatem* 31.

humanity, in the light of Christ, but on the other hand does not seem to accept the fullness of humanity, made in the image of God. Lakeland's definition of a layperson is 'a Christian baptised into mission to the world beyond the Church.'¹²⁵ I would amplify this to include a mission within the Church. The Church teaches that 'men and women who are made 'new' by the love of God are able to change the rules and the quality of relationships, transforming even social structures'.¹²⁶ Does it practice that teaching?

Here Catholics may learn from the experiences of other Christians, who have forged ahead of the Catholic Church in their inclusion of women in the ordained ministry, and yet still face issues of gender inequality and discrimination. The reflections of ordained women clearly expose the tensions that still exist, and which underline the complexity of attitudes that need changing before women are treated as equal. Many female clergy describe feeling that in order to gain acceptance, they have had to either copy male behaviour and language, or to tolerate behaviour and attitudes that they elsewhere would have found offensive, so as not to affect the status quo.¹²⁷ Ordained women tend to overcompensate by being very driven, taking on complex workloads, which can lead to stress and burn out. These women, as with many others working in male dominated spheres, are often stereotyped. Laity and fellow clergy consider them as either weak and sentimental, or aggressive and outspoken, provoking incidents such as that encountered by the then newly ordained Ann Logan:

A very senior minister told me just before we went to lead worship together that I shouldn't wear a dog collar because it was 'very unfeminine'...I was being told that a dog collar was unfeminine by a man who was to all intents and purposes wearing a long black dress!¹²⁸

Many respondents to the 2013 Scottish survey did not see the ordination of Catholic women as a panacea for the participation of women in the Church because they considered the current model of priesthood itself to be in desperate need of reform. These respondents recognised that there was more

¹²⁵ Paul Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads* (New York: Continuum Int. Publishing, 2008), 125.

¹²⁶ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 4.

¹²⁷ Jeanne Stevenson, *Through the eyes of women* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996), 84.

¹²⁸ Anne Logan, Paper 1: 'Lady ministers, Language, Role and the Ordination of women' Colloquium Women, Language and Worship in the Church of Scotland (June 07, 2012, New College, Edinburgh).

freedom on the margins than there would be as part of a flawed role within the institution. Linda Woodhead echoed this sentiment succinctly when she pointed out that for some Anglican women putting on a dog collar had actually brought the constraints of a leash.¹²⁹ Could it be that there are possibilities on the peripheries that would be tempered closer to the centre of authority? Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza formulated her critical theology of liberation to establish a discipleship of equals. Rather than aim to join a flawed hierarchical system, women should concentrate their efforts on transforming the institution to be an equitable community of ‘radical discipleship’.¹³⁰ This is also my belief, and would seem to be a process that many of the respondents in my own research would welcome and support. In this context, a new focus on the ecclesial roles open to the laity, such as the ministry of Catechist, used so profitably in many parts of the world to sustain and develop parish ministry and mission, is both possible and progressive.

The Catholic Church was once seen as a perfect society that must be kept apart from the tainting influence of a flawed world.¹³¹ Vatican II however unequivocally stated: ‘this community realizes that it is truly linked with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds’.¹³² Richard Gaillardetz identifies this change of perspective, as vitally important: ‘few teachings had greater consequence for the Church in all its institutional forms than this council teaching on the need for church reform and renewal.’¹³³ Discussion of reform since the Council has been widespread, both among those who wanted to resist change, and with others who felt change was not happening fast enough. This has not been merely a simplistic division between so-called conservatives and progressives. Rather it has exposed a multi-faceted diversity of opinions, showing a whole spectrum of views within both strands of thought, and a growing chasm between the hierarchy, the clergy, and the lay faithful. Around the world, Church reform groups have arisen involving clergy and laity, for example Future Church in the US, A Call To Action in the UK, and the Association

¹²⁹ Linda Woodhead, ‘A Woman’s Place’, *The Tablet*, December 1, 2012, 20.

¹³⁰ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), 48.

¹³¹ See for example Pope Gregory XVI’s 1832 encyclical *Mirari Vos*.

¹³² Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 1.

¹³³ Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 169.

of Catholics in Ireland.¹³⁴ These groups could find Cardinal Rodé's hermeneutic of reform for Religious life helpful, in which he diagnoses three fundamental elements for consideration. Firstly: the identification of the essentials which need to be preserved; secondly, investigation into how to correct essentials that have gone wrong; and thirdly, new ways to implement the essentials.¹³⁵ I would suggest that study of lay participation in the ministry and mission of the Church be undertaken utilising this tripartite schema.

This would also reaffirm the earlier teaching of another Cardinal, Avery Dulles, who wrote:

to reform is to give new and better form to a pre-existent reality, while preserving the essentials. Unlike innovation, reform implies organic continuity; it does not add something foreign or extrinsic. Unlike revolution or transformation, reform respects and retains the substance that was previously there. Unlike development, it implies that something has gone wrong and needs to be corrected ... the goal is to make persons or institutions more faithful to an ideal already accepted.¹³⁶

In his encyclical on the Church, written during the period of Vatican II, Paul VI set out the need for just such reform, advocating mission rather than maintenance: 'This is the source of the Church's heroic and impatient struggle for renewal: the struggle to correct those flaws introduced by her members which her own self-examination, mirroring her exemplar, Christ, points out to her and condemns'.¹³⁷ Pope Francis too reminds the Church: 'even good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them'.¹³⁸ This call for evaluation and accountability is exactly what many of the respondents to the empirical research identified as a vital need.

We are in a new era in the Catholic Church, which has relevance for this thesis. This is not because Pope Francis is a revolutionary in any sense, but rather because he is orthodox, indeed doctrinally conservative, yet in his openness to pastoral needs and to reading the signs of the times he is seen to be radical and

¹³⁴ <https://www.futurechurch.org/>, <http://www.acalltoaction.org.uk/>, <http://www.acireland.ie/>.

¹³⁵ Francis Rodé, 'Reforming religious life with the right hermeneutic', Stonehill College Symposium on Apostolic Life since Vatican II, October 13, 2008, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/cardinal-rode-at-symposium-on-consecrated-life>.

¹³⁶ Avery Dulles, 'True and False Reform', *First Things*, 135 August/September (2003): 15.

¹³⁷ Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), 11.

¹³⁸ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 26.

authentic. This has created a form of *via media*. By advocating an urgent decentralisation of Church authority Francis has declared his personal belief that the magisterium cannot tender ‘a definitive or complete word’ on all the issues that affect the Church and the world.¹³⁹ His personal humility extends to the wider Church, which is urged to acknowledge that God works in the world in ways beyond human understanding or expectation. Francis calls for the development of a watchful receptivity, as ‘God’s word is unpredictable in its power.’¹⁴⁰ This would find echo in the research responses we have considered, which called for a similar acceptance of the freedom of the Spirit.

Francis has already initiated some change relevant to the themes raised in this thesis. As well as authorising the first widespread consultation of laity and clergy in preparation for a Synod,¹⁴¹ he also made the appointment of the first laywoman as Under-Secretary of a pontifical council. Flaminia Giovanelli has worked at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace for thirty-nine years, so views her promotion there as largely a ‘question of continuity’. Speaking about her appointment, she stressed the evolution in thinking at the Vatican, which has opened up opportunities for the laity, but she also spoke enigmatically of the necessity for a female employee ‘to be discreet and do your [her] best to advance in your [her] formation as a member of an ecclesiastical body’.¹⁴² Giovanelli credits a new openness to women in the Vatican to the pontificate of Benedict XVI, which Francis is now expanding.

Bishop Kevin Dowling recently compared Pope Francis to Archbishops Oscar Romero and Denis Hurley, seeing them as three shepherds who knew how to ‘do theology at the coalface’, that is amid the messiness of daily human living with appreciation of the struggles and dilemmas with which humanity has to contend.¹⁴³ This is not to assert, however, that Pope Francis regards the issue of women’s participation in the Church as a priority, or that he has overcome all the attitudes inherent in his clerical formation. He recently referred to female members of the International Theological Commission as ‘the strawberry on the

¹³⁹ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 16.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibi.*, 22.

¹⁴¹ That is, the Synod of Bishops’ discussions on marriage and the family in 2014-15.

¹⁴² Flaminia Giovanelli, ‘Interview’ with *Zenit*, July 31, 2014, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/flaminia-giovanelli-says-revolution-in-church-isn-t-just-that-of-women-but-of-laypeople>.

¹⁴³ Kevin Dowling, ‘The Joy of the Gospel then and now: from Archbishop Hurley to Francis’ (Talk, Edinburgh June 23, 2014).

cake’ failing to recognise that women are key ingredients of ‘the cake’ i.e. the Church.¹⁴⁴ However, Francis has also drawn awareness to a new paradigm of the relationship of women and men ‘of reciprocity in equivalence and in difference,’ recognizing that the Church needs the contribution of both sexes.¹⁴⁵

In the earlier research on the participation of women in the Church, sexism was seen as the major factor hindering progress. In the findings of the 2013 Scottish survey, clericalism is identified as the most negative aspect in the current life of the Church. Clericalism exists within the laity as well as within the clergy, and leads to unhealthy divisions and the nurturing of an exclusive mentality, which is corrosive and completely contrary to the values of the gospel. This issue is fundamentally about leadership and can be addressed by collegiality and recognition and respect for the skills and charisms of each human person.

Two principles of Catholic Social Teaching could aid the eradication of clericalism: the first is subsidiarity, that is, the delegation of control or discernment to the lowest possible order, fundamentally respecting the dignity and value of each human person. Subsidiarity is promoted by both the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Charles Curran, (perceived as a dissident Catholic theologian), as a tool to promote unity and prohibit the equal dangers of collectivism and individualism, surely proof positive that it can contribute to harmony and reconciliation.¹⁴⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez and the proponents of liberation theology identified the second key principle, solidarity.¹⁴⁷ Accepting the communal responsibilities of being Church means that the hierarchy cannot simply be lambasted for systemic failures, as laity must also accept their own role in failing to address inequality. There needs to be a paradigm shift in the attitudes of laywomen and men that causes them both to reflect and act upon the graces and responsibilities inherent in their baptism. The 2013 Scottish survey identifies among some people a lack of faith knowledge and a wide diversity of understanding of what is faith practice. Fewer Catholics are

¹⁴⁴ Francis, Speech to the International Theological Commission, Rome, December 05, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/theology/pope-tells-vatican-theological-commission-respect-diverse-views>.

¹⁴⁵ Francis, Audience with participants of “Women’s cultures: between equality and difference” Plenary Assembly of Pontifical Council for Culture, Rome, February 07, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/pope-s-quotes-equality-and-difference>.

¹⁴⁶ Charles Curran, *Loyal Dissent, Memoir of a Catholic Theologian* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 249, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1885.

¹⁴⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1973).

attending Mass regularly, and of these, fewer still are actively engaged in the local Church. Merely attending Mass is not the fully conscious and active participation in the liturgy that Vatican II called for.¹⁴⁸

I support Michelle Dillon's argument, that the documents of Vatican II, because of their discursive style and desire to reconcile differing viewpoints, can offer a model to move the Church from a formal hierarchical power base, to more equitable and inclusive communitarian authority.¹⁴⁹ It would seem that Pope Francis is in accord as he has affirmed that his own teaching developed from *Lumen Gentium*.¹⁵⁰ From the outset of his papacy, Francis has embraced this model, proclaiming even in his first homily that 'authentic power is service'.¹⁵¹ Echoing the call of Vatican II to read the signs of the times Pope Francis has also prayed: 'Lord, free your people from a spirit of clericalism and aid them with a spirit of prophecy'. He has emphasized that it is necessary to learn both from the past and from the present in order to move forward into the future as one people of God.¹⁵² Francis admitted: 'our clerical attitudes have done much damage to the Church'.¹⁵³ Authority should not be equated with power nor should legalism inhibit true human flourishing. Pope Francis has identified the need for the Church to embrace compassion and mercy, the very attributes so many respondents to the Anglosphere research sensed were lacking within the institutional Church.

In July 2014, an interesting editorial in *The Tablet* discussed the admission of women to the episcopate in the Church of England. This echoed my own conviction that the non-ordination of women in the Catholic Church is more of a blessing than a curse, since it prevents 'clericalising its best female leadership talent and has to come to terms with them as laywomen'.¹⁵⁴ In September 2014, there was a protest in Ireland against the Bishop of Killaloe's plan to introduce the Permanent Diaconate; this arose from the laity who saw this as the

¹⁴⁸ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14.

¹⁴⁹ Michelle Dillon, *Catholic Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 48.

¹⁵⁰ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 17.

¹⁵¹ Francis, 'Homily at Inaugural Mass', Vatican City, March 19, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130319_omelia-inizio-pontificato_en.html.

¹⁵² Francis, 'Homily', Casa Santa Marta, Vatican City, December 17, 2013.

¹⁵³ Francis, 'Speech at Sogang University', Korea, August 15, 2014, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-korean-surprises>.

¹⁵⁴ Catherine Pepinster, 'Editorial', *The Tablet*, July 19, 2014, 2.

imposition of another clerical and male-only ministry. Bishop O'Reilly listened to the concerns and decided not to precede with his plans meantime, hopefully a sign of interest in constructive dialogue being part of decision-making.¹⁵⁵

Many people in the 2013 Scottish survey, both clergy and laity, spoke of the alienation provoked by clericalism in the liturgical life of the Church, suggesting that it prevents people from being nurtured spiritually by the faith community. Clericalism affects formation too, especially when dioceses do not envisage providing opportunities for the faith development of lay adults as a priority. Research participants spoke of the adverse effect of clericalism on Church administration, when the expertise of the laity, often greater than that of clergy, is ignored. I would agree with Rosemary Radford Ruether's identification of these areas as severely distorting factors for faith communities making the laity merely passive dependents rather than active participants as Vatican II advocated.¹⁵⁶

In the context of this debate, Edward Kilmartin has drawn attention to a little known document, the Pastoral Commission of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelisation of People's study on *The Role of Women in Evangelisation*. In this document, the Book of Genesis is used as a proof text to justify the isolation of women into a separate sphere of activity from the Church, understood as the province of men. However, Kilmartin highlights some positive affirmations of pastoral apostolates that women may exercise, as long as they are not termed 'ministries', restricting this term for the sacerdotal functions of the clergy. Positively, the study suggests that Religious women be commissioned to look after parishes, taking care of everything that is not 'of its nature sacerdotal'.¹⁵⁷ This document was the blueprint that some bishops used to explore innovative pastoral roles in the 1970's and 1980's; it could provide a seedbed for greater involvement of laywomen and laymen in ministry in our time. In Scotland we have in the past had a Sister as Pastoral Assistant for a parish in the diocese of Paisley and a laywoman in the diocese of Aberdeen. However, these roles were

¹⁵⁵ Kieran O'Reilly, 'Diocesan letter' in News from Britain and Ireland, *The Tablet*, September 20, 2014, 32.

¹⁵⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 75.

¹⁵⁷ Edward Kilmartin, 'Full participation of women in the life of the Catholic Church' in *Sexism and Church Law*, James A. Corriden (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 109-135.

neither replicated nor developed. Study by the Scottish hierarchy of practices in other countries in Europe, North America, and Australia where laity are employed in parish pastoral roles to great benefit, might aid development of such opportunities here.

It is my opinion that the Church must transform its understanding of women as receptive and men as expressive, that is the idea that one gender receives, whilst the other gives, into a realisation that both genders have the capacity both to give and to receive. Indeed, to be receptive is not to be passive but to be actively open to co-operation with others. Human fulfilment is only realised when this mutual receptivity is achieved. Marilyn Gustin argues that this receptivity lies in the human soul and that it transcends gender difference: this seems to me to be an important point.¹⁵⁸ Recognition of this commonality, with the subsequent cultivation of the capacity to respond to the same openness in others, could be another tool for the Church's development of true and permanent gender equality. This echoes the call for reconciled diversity which Pope Francis has advocated in the area of Christian unity: 'For this to be effective, we need to stop being self-enclosed, exclusive, and bent on imposing a uniformity based on merely human calculations.'¹⁵⁹ Francis emphasises that difference is to be expected, but that division is against the mind of God: 'who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony.'¹⁶⁰ This surely applies not only *ad extra*, between the Churches, but also *ad intra*, within the Church.

Conclusion

Pope Francis in calling the Church to conversion; in recognising that 'mere administration can no longer be enough', in warning that things cannot be allowed to continue as they are now, mirrors the comments from the research participants.¹⁶¹ This thesis has evidenced their belief that we are Easter People;

¹⁵⁸ Marilyn J. Gustin, 'The Receptive Partner' in *Where can we find her*, Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 99.

¹⁵⁹ Francis, 'Homily at the Conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity', St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, January 27, 2014, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-homily-at-the-conclusion-of-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity>.

¹⁶⁰ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 117.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

always people of hope: hope that change can come, that research will be noted and used to inform development of practice, that justice and peace can flourish.

With Francis we trust:

Each day in our world beauty is born anew; it rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises, and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection...¹⁶²

Women and men need to use that power together if the Church is to be the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world. The mutual and equitable participation of both women and men in the Church, using the skills and experiences from whatever state of life they are in, to the best of their abilities, will then be able to authentically witness their faith through their actions.¹⁶³

We need witnesses and prophets, people inspired by their faith to speak truth to power, within the Church as well as to secular authorities. We need teachers who are open to learning too. Most of all we need leaders who see their role as pastoral service to others. Their purpose, as Joan Chittister so poignantly phrases it, is not only to 'make the present bearable' but also to 'make the future possible'.¹⁶⁴

Proof has been given that all of the Anglosphere research on the Participation of Women, particularly the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus Report*, still have much to contribute to any discussion about the roles and responsibilities for women within the Catholic Church. As with the documents of Vatican II, these research findings are of such quality and authenticity that they retain value despite the passage of time, and deserve deeper study.

This opinion was ratified by the Australian Bishops' Conference when in November 2014 they digitalised the long out of print *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus Report* and made it available as a study resource on the website of the National Office for the Participation of Women 'to deepen your faith'. In this fifteenth anniversary of its publication, they too still find it relevant, even

¹⁶² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 276.

¹⁶³ James 2:18.

¹⁶⁴ Joan Chittister, 'Making the future possible' in *Spiritual Leadership for Challenging Times*, Annmarie Sanders, (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2014), 14.

as the video clip of the Press Launch of the Report in 1999 clearly shows the diverse and controversial reception of the Report.¹⁶⁵

At this point in time we are faced with what Pope Francis calls the ‘biggest threat of all’:

the grey pragmatism of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness. A tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum.¹⁶⁶

This study has been fuelled by a conviction, shared by Pope Francis it would seem, that there needs to be decisive action to create more opportunities and greater participation by women in the Church.¹⁶⁷ Receptive feminism could provide an oblique approach to underpin dialogue and consultation. I suggest that opportunities for dialogue and formation could be developed at the grass roots among the laity, as well as at parish or diocesan level where the clergy are interested and supportive. This would not be in opposition to institutional initiatives but in tandem with these. However, this would circumvent the need to wait on change at hierarchical level, of necessity a slow and laborious process, instead the current flourishing of local reform groups could be developed and strengthened.

The research findings clearly identified a consensus that any consideration of the role of women should be conducted in the context of laymen too. Receptive feminism would allow the respectful listening to and learning from the experiences of both women and men, discovering areas of agreement and acknowledging fields of difference. This would also apply to the different spheres of women, where diversity would no longer be perceived as a threat but embraced as enhancement.

The institutional Church needs to implement its own teaching and legislation on the roles and responsibilities of the laity. Reclaiming the lay vocation would provide opportunities to enable people to use and develop their God-given

¹⁶⁵ See National Office for the Participation of Women, <http://opw.catholic.org.au/woman-and-man/woman-and-man-resources.html>.

¹⁶⁶ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 83.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

talents to the benefit of the faith community and the world at large, in ministries that are already sanctioned by canon law.

Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this research, it is now possible to state that although much has been achieved, much more could be done to integrate women, and thereby laymen too, into the life and mission of the Church at every level. Women's participation in the Church is arguably greater today than at any time in history but this is still within restricted parameters, although the barriers are not insurmountable.

I hope that this thesis will be a useful tool in the ongoing deliberations in the Church about the participation of women, providing a panoramic summary of past research in the Anglosphere nations and relevant Church teaching. The 2013 data confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence. It has also provided an opportunity to record the opinions of some contemporary Catholic women and men in the local Church.

As with all research this thesis has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. There is, therefore, no final word merely proof of many signs of hope, and interesting trajectories for future study.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire form

Essential Background information: (Please complete - all data will be kept confidential)

- Gender - Male/Female
- Year of birth -
- State of life - Lay single/married/widowed/divorced/separated/living with a partner/Religious/ Clergy
- Town of residence -
- Religion - Catholic & Mass attender/Catholic but non-Mass attender/other Christian/other faith/none
- Education (highest level attained) - High school/College/1st degree/Post grad/Doctorate
- Occupation -

Question 1 - Do you feel a strong sense of belonging to your parish? YES/NO
(If Yes - why? If No - why not?)

Question 2 - Are you actively involved in your parish? YES/NO
(If Yes - how? If No - why not?)

Question 3 - Have you ever taken up education/training offered by/for the church? NO/YES
(If Yes - what kind - please circle any that apply)

7. Catechesis
8. Adult education
9. Studies in theology
10. Safeguarding training
11. Training for ministry - reader/Eucharistic minister/chaplaincy/youth work/music ministry
12. Independent self-funded theological study

Question 4 - Do you think that laymen and women are equally given opportunities to participate in church life? YES/NO?
(If Yes - why? If No - why not?)

Question 5 - Have you - or anyone you personally know - ever felt excluded from participation in the church? NO/YES - (if Yes - please circle any that apply)

1. Myself
2. A female friend/family member/other person
3. A male friend/family member/other person

Question 6 - Some say there are barriers to lay participation in the church - have you - or anyone you know - experienced any of these? NO /YES (Please circle any that apply)

1. Opposition or lack of support from clergy?
2. Opposition or lack of support from laymen?
3. Opposition or lack of support from laywomen?
4. Opposition or lack of support from older people?
5. Barriers caused by institutional structures in the Church?
6. Other - please describe -

Question 7 - In your opinion, what support do laymen and women currently receive to enable them to participate in church life? (Please circle all that apply)

10. Opportunities to take part in theological education
11. Financial assistance to undertake study or training - e.g. bursaries/grants
12. Job opportunities in church work
13. Volunteer opportunities for the Church
14. Formal/informal support from clergy
15. Formal/informal support from other lay people

- 16. Other forms of support
- 17. Little current support
- 18. No current support

Question 8 - Do you think using inclusive language would be helpful in promoting the equality of men and women?

Yes No Don't know
(If Yes - why? If No - why not?)

Question 9 - What do you think might help lay people participate more in church life?
(Please circle all that apply)

- 1. Education for laity about their roles/responsibilities as members of the church
- 2. Practical training/formation for laity
- 3. Education for clergy about the roles/responsibilities of the laity in the church
- 4. Opportunities for laity to use their theological qualifications
- 5. Opportunities for laity to use their professional qualifications/work experience
- 6. Opportunities for laity to use their life experience - e.g. in pastoral ministry
- 7. More paid job opportunities
- 8. Other - please describe -

Question 10 - Some say there are specific barriers to the participation of women in the church - have you - or women you know - experienced any of these - NO/YES - *(Please circle all that apply)*

- 1. Opposition or lack of support from clergy
- 2. Opposition or lack of support from laymen
- 3. Opposition or lack of support from laywomen
- 4. Preference given to men
- 5. Barriers caused by institutional structures in the Church
- 6. Other - please describe -

Question 11 - What do you think would be the most effective ways to increase the participation of women in the Church? *(Please circle all that apply)*

- 1. Prayer
- 2. Use of gender inclusive language in liturgy
- 3. Providing opportunities for increasing women's involvement in decision making
- 4. Reforming practices that do not promote equality
- 5. Training in collaborative ministry for clergy
- 6. Training in collaborative ministry for laity
- 7. Establishing a Women's Commission as a consultative body to the bishops Conference
- 8. Other - please describe -

Question 12 -Pope Benedict recently said that '*the laity in the Church should be considered not as "collaborators" with the clergy, but as persons truly "co-responsible" for the being and activity of the Church*'. How can lay people exercise this co-responsibility? *(Please circle all that apply)*

- 1. Prayer
- 2. Attendance at Sunday Mass
- 3. Joining parish groups
- 4. Helping to administer parish/care for church building
- 5. Involvement in Pastoral ministries
- 6. Involvement in Liturgical ministries
- 7. Involvement in Chaplaincy teams
- 8. Involvement in theological education/catechesis
- 9. Other - please describe -

(Thank you for taking the time to participate in the research project)

Appendix 2 - Written submission request form

Written submissions are invited to the four research questions.

(Some background information on respondents is necessary but this will be kept strictly confidential)

1. Gender - Male/Female
2. Year of birth -
3. State of life - Lay single/married/widowed/divorced/separated/living with a partner/Clergy/Religious
4. Town of residence -
5. Religion - Catholic & Mass attender/Catholic but non-Mass attender/other Christian/other faith/none
6. Education (Highest level attained) - High school/College/1st degree/Post grad/Doctorate
7. Occupation -

Please comment on the following four questions:

1. What are the ways in which women currently participate in the Catholic Church?
2. What assistance and support are currently offered to women to participate in the Church?
3. What are barriers to women's participation in the Church?
4. What are some ways in which women's participation in the Church can be increased?

Appendix 3 - Coding Framework (from the *Woman and Man: One in Christ*

Jesus research project)

Appendix 3: Coding Framework (from *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*)

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 1001 not requested
- 1002 do not list this submission
- 1003 do not refer to this submission
- 1004 do not refer to parts circled in red

Comments about the research

- 1005 concern that the research on women's participation neglects other groups
- 1006 concern that the views expressed apply also to laymen
- 1007 concern that the research on women's participation panders to a feminist agenda
- 1008 concern that the term 'participation' is not defined
- 1009 concern that the term 'participation in' implies that women are not an integral part of the Church
- 1010 other concerns about the research
- 1011 appreciation that the bishops have undertaken this project
- 1012 appreciation for the opportunity to be involved in this project

Ques 1. What are the various ways in which women participate in the Catholic Church?

Description of responses - Voluntary roles

Home

- 1101 home
- 1102 wife
- 1103 mother
- 1104 faith educator in the home
- 1105 provider of hospitality at home
- 1106 other roles in the home

Parish

- 1107 voluntary pastoral associate
- 1108 voluntary parish staff roles
- 1109 parish (pastoral) council
- 1110 other volunteer leadership & ministry roles
- 1111 leaders of prayer and communion services
- 1112 general participation
- 1113 ministers of the Eucharist
- 1114 readers
- 1115 altar girls
- 1116 other liturgical preparation and involvement
- 1117 sacramental preparation groups
- 1118 catechetical roles with children
- 1119 government school catechist
- 1120 catechetical roles with adults (RCIA)
- 1121 cleaning and maintenance roles

- 1123 catering roles
- 1124 financial contribution
- 1125 small Christian communities
- 1126 prayer groups
- 1127 discussion groups
- 1128 service group e.g. St. Vincent de Paul)
- 1127 ecumenical groups
- 1130 social justice groups
- 1131 mothers and children's groups (incl. play groups)
- 1132 family groups
- 1133 social and sporting groups
- 1134 women's groups
- 1135 other group participation
- 1136 taking communion to the sick and elderly
- 1137 visitation
- 1138 other caring roles
- 1139 other voluntary parish roles

Wider community

- 1140 contribution to the wider society
- 1141 visitation
- 1142 women's groups and organisations
- 1143 community organisations
- 1144 community service
- 1145 work with ethnic communities
- 1146 work with rural communities
- 1147 workplace

Health & social Welfare

- 1148 social welfare roles
- 1149 health care roles
- 1150 counselling roles
- 1151 other healing ministries

Education

- 1152 education
- 1153 parent involvement in schools
- 1154 adult education roles
- 1155 other voluntary education roles
- 1156 theological student

Wider Church

- 1157 pastoral formation student
- 1158 tertiary Catholic student groups
- 1159 diocesan pastoral councils
- 1160 other diocesan agencies or commissions
- 1161 national agencies or commissions
- 1162 chaplaincy roles
- 1163 Catholic Women's League
- 1164 Marriage Encounter
- 1165 Teams of Our Lady
- 1166 other Catholic organisations
- 1167 overseas missions

Religious Congregations of Women

- 1168 membership of religious congregations
- 1169 education
- 1170 health care
- 1171 rural communities
- 1172 overseas missions
- 1173 other ministries of religious congregations

Other voluntary roles

- 1174 other voluntary roles

Professional roles in Catholic OrganisationsParish

- 1201 pastoral associate (parish pastoral worker)
- 1202 other parish staff roles

Catholic Health and Social Welfare

- 1203 social welfare
- 1204 health care
- 1205 counselling

Catholic Education

- 1206 schoolteachers
- 1207 Religious Education teaching
- 1208 school principals
- 1209 other school administrators
- 1210 Catholic Education Office
- 1211 tertiary education
- 1212 theology lecturer
- 1213 pastoral formation educator
- 1214 adult education
- 1215 other educational roles

Wider Church

- 1216 diocesan agencies or commissions
- 1217 national agencies or commissions
- 1218 Catholic organisations
- 1219 other professional roles

Voluntary/Professional not specified

- 1301 education
- 1302 wider church
- 1303 health and service welfare

Other

- 1401 no response
- 1402 don't know
- 1403 don't understand question
- 1404 other

Overall response to Ques 1

- 1501 satisfied with current ways of participating

- 1502 seeks greater participation
- 1503 historical background noted
- 1504 limitations of women's participation noted
- 1505 participation limited because women can't be ordained
- 1506 includes passages suitable for quotation
- 1507 provides an example of a significant submission

Ques. 2 What assistance and support are currently offered to women to participate in the Church?

Quantity of assistance & support

- 2101 no support or assistance needed
- 2102 not aware of any specifically for women
- 2103 no support or assistance offered
- 2104 hardly any assistance or support offered
- 2105 spasmodic assistance and support offered
- 2106 some assistance and support
- 2107 adequate assistance and support
- 2108 a lot of assistance and support
- 2109 more support and assistance than previously offered
- 2110 more support and assistance than necessary
- 2111 very little support or assistance offered to laywomen
- 2112 as much support and assistance as offered to laymen
- 2113 no support for women who do things informally
- 2114 no support for separated or divorced women
- 2115 no support for mothers of disabled children
- 2116 varies depending on priest/parish/diocese
- 2117 difficulties with access to support and assistance due to location
- 2118 difficulties with access to support and assistance due to lack of childcare provisions
- 2119 other factors relating to the quantity of assistance and support

Nature of assistance & support

- 2201 support for motherhood and caring roles
- 2202 support to undertake faith education roles in the home, school or with adults
- 2203 help with childcare provided
- 2204 work arrangements offered by Church employers that help people harmonise their work and family responsibilities
- 2205 support to participate in parish lay ministries
- 2206 sacramental programs
- 2207 education and training undertaken at women's own expense
- 2208 funded training offered
- 2209 adult faith education available
- 2210 pastoral training available
- 2211 theological training available
- 2212 promotion of collaborative ministry
- 2213 assistance, support and encouragement to undertake leadership roles
- 2214 assistance, support and encouragement to share in decision-making roles
- 2215 assistance, support & encouragement to undertake further study
- 2216 assistance and support to undertake ancillary roles or menial

tasks

- 2217 support and assistance to participate in diocesan Church committees or groups
- 2218 publications /conferences /seminars
- 2219 other ways of providing assistance or support

Source of assistance and support

- 2301 support from husband/family
- 2302 support from other women
- 2303 support from women's groups
- 2304 support from own religious congregation
- 2305 support from women religious
- 2306 support from groups and movements
- 2307 support from parish priest
- 2308 support from parish pastoral workers (pastoral associates)
- 2309 some priests/bishops supportive and encouraging
- 2310 support from spiritual directors, chaplains, retreat directors
- 2311 other sources of assistance and support

Other

- 2401 no response
- 2402 don't know
- 2403 don't understand question
- 2404 other

Overall response to Ques.2

- 2501 satisfied with current assistance and support for women
- 2502 seeks greater assistance and support for women
- 2503 includes passages suitable for quotation
- 2504 provides an example of a significant submission

Ques. 3 What are the barriers to women's participation in the Catholic Church?

No barriers

- 3001 There are no barriers to women's participation in the Church

Society & culture

- 3101 a tradition of social, professional & religious inferiority concerning women
 - 3102 the current attitude of the superiority of men in our society
 - 3103 a culture that is controlled by male dominant ideas
 - 3104 entrenched ideas, which are resistant to change
 - 3105 lack of inclusive language
 - 3106 women's attitude concerning traditional expectations of their role
 - 3107 radical/ aggressive feminism
 - 3108 family responsibilities
 - 3109 work responsibilities
 - 3110 lack of time
 - 3111 other social & cultural barriers
 - 3112 women in migrant and refugee communities
 - 3113 English language difficulties
 - 3114 personal difficulties e.g. illness, shyness, age
- Church structures & practices

- 3201 a particular priest's attitude to women
- 3202 the negative attitude of some priests to women
- 3203 the negative attitude of some bishops to women
- 3204 the negative attitude of some laymen to women
- 3205 the negative attitude of some laywomen to women
- 3206 the negative attitude of the Vatican to women
- 3207 the negative attitude of the Pope to women
- 3208 apathy among women in the Church
- 3209 lack of encouragement by men for women to participate in Church matters
- 3210 women's contribution undervalued
- 3211 the tendency on the part of the clerics to deny the existence of conflict or difference
- 3212 men's fear of women's participation
- 3213 clergy's fear of women's participation
- 3214 lack of recognition of the laity
- 3215 patriarchal system of the Church
- 3216 the hierarchical structure of the Church
- 3217 the authoritarian nature of the Church
- 3218 fear of speaking out
- 3219 concern of Church leaders with wealth and power
- 3220 decision-making reserved to clerics
- 3221 lack of women in the Vatican
- 3222 lack of participation in decision-making processes of the Church
- 3223 few opportunities to participate in leadership of the Church
- 3224 lack of consultation on the appointments of bishops
- 3225 systems and structures in the Church, which are not in touch with the contemporary needs and experiences of people
- 3226 canon law
- 3227 lack of inclusive religious imagery and language
- 3228 lack of inclusive social language in the church
- 3229 use of inclusive language in the Church
- 3230 lack of awareness of women's history and experiences in the Church
- 3231 discrimination in the Church on the basis of gender
- 3232 lack of gender equity on Church committees at parish level
- 3233 lack of gender equity on Church committees at diocesan level
- 3234 lack of gender equity on Church committees at national level
- 3235 girls not being able to act as altar servers
- 3236 exclusion of women as Eucharist ministers
- 3237 women who seek to play too much of a role in the Church
- 3238 breakdown in communications in various levels in the Church
- 3239 lack of information about opportunities for participation
- 3240 unfortunate past experiences within the Church
- 3241 lack of adult faith education
- 3242 lack of education for ministry in the Church
- 3243 cost of theological and ministry courses
- 3244 other barriers associated with Church structures and practices

Church teachings

- 3301 the Church's traditional teaching concerning women
- 3302 the Church's traditional teaching on abortion
- 3303 the Church's traditional teaching on contraception
- 3304 the Church's traditional teaching on divorce and remarriage

- 3305 the Church's traditional teaching on the compulsory celibacy of priests
- 3306 the Church's teaching on the ordination of women
- 3307 the Pope's ban on the discussion of the possibility of women's ordination
- 3308 the only barriers to the participation of women seem to be those duties exclusive to the priesthood
- 3309 women not being able to marry clergy and fulfil the special ministry of a clergyman's wife
- 3310 other factors relating to Church teachings

Professional service & employment

- 3401 lack of perceived career path that opens up positions, which are available only to ordained ministers
- 3402 lack of appropriate remuneration levels
- 3403 lack of status as a paid minister
- 3404 lack of professional structures e.g. role descriptions, duty statements, tenure, contracts, appraisal proceeds
- 3405 lack of finance can be a barrier to women being formed for leadership levels e.g. university degree
- 3406 other professional factors

Other

- 3501 no response
- 3502 don't know
- 3503 don't understand the question
- 3504 other

Overall response to Ques.3

- 3601 supports the current participation of women
- 3602 seeks greater participation of women
- 3603 includes passages suitable for quotation
- 3604 provides an example of a significant submission

Ques. 4 What are some ways in which women's participation in the Church can be increased?

Society & Culture

- 4101 promote gender equality and opportunities
- 4102 foster respect for women's unique contribution
- 4103 promote the recognition of the central importance of women's work in the home
- 4104 other social and cultural ways to increase participation

Church structures & practices

Home

- 4201 support the role of women as wives/mothers
- 4202 support the role of women as full-time mothers
- 4203 strengthen family faith formation and prayer life
- 4204 provide education programs for women, which foster the faith education of young children

Communication & Consultation

- 4242 establish women's advisory bodies to advise the bishops
- 4243 set up communications processes within the Church with broad

consultation

- 4244 seek opinion on key issues within the Church
- 4245 encourage women to have a voice in the Church
- 4246 publicise women's achievements in the Church
- 4247 allow ongoing discussion about the ordination of women

Decision-making

- 4248 increase women's involvement in decision-making at all levels
- 4249 increase women's involvement in decision-making at parish level
- 4250 increase women's involvement in decision-making at diocesan level
- 4251 increase women's involvement in decision-making in Vatican congregations
- 4252 remove the connection between decision-making and ordination
- 4253 leave decision-making in the hands of the priests

Leadership

- 4254 educate women and men in the vision of shared leadership
- 4255 appoint women as spokespersons for the Church where appropriate
- 4256 promote opportunities for women to participate in leadership in the Church
- 4257 appoint women to major diocesan leadership groups
- 4258 appoint women as parish pastoral coordinators
- 4259 appoint women as the leaders of basic ecclesial communities

Education

- 4260 promote a knowledge of women's history to gain a sense of their identity in the church
- 4261 educate Catholics on gender equality and justice
- 4262 re-educate bishops and priests on women's issues & women's
- 4063 theology
- 4264 encourage women in catechetical work in government schools
- 4265 place religious education in the hands of priests & religious
- 4266 establish more coeducational Catholic schools

Theological education

- 4266 re-examine the portrayal of men and women in moral theology
- 4267 provide access for women to pastoral, religious & theological education
- 4268 women's theological work to be seen as valid and as important in the Church
- 4269 encourage theologically qualified women to become professors in the seminary
- 4270 training for the priesthood to involve personal development & counselling, women's issues and women's theology

Other

- 4271 other ways to increase women's participation regarding Church structures and practices

Church teachingsGender equality

- 4301 reform beliefs and associated practices that do not promote equality of men and women

Priesthood & Ministry

- 4302 examine the position of women in the early Church as deacons, Eucharist leaders and their presence at the Last Supper
- 4303 permit women to marry the clergy and fulfil the special ministry of a clergyman's wife
- 4304 permit women to be ordained as deacons
- 4305 permit women to be ordained as priests
- 4306 give women who work in ministries to the sick the power to heal and absolve

Marriage & Family

- 4307 explain the Church's teaching on birth control
- 4308 support the Church's teaching on family planning
- 4309 clergy to support the Church's pro-life stance
- 4310 revise the Church's teaching on artificial contraception
- 4311 reconsider the Church's teaching on divorce and remarriage

Other

- 4312 other ways to increase women's participation associated with Church teachings

Professional Service & employment

- 4401 foster opportunities for using the academic & theological qualifications & experiences of women in the service of the Church
- 4402 encourage women to assume professional leadership roles in the Church where appropriate
- 4403 provide appropriate status and remuneration for women in the professional service and employment of the Church
- 4404 develop adequate structures and procedures for professional roles: e.g. role descriptions, duty statements, tenure, contracts, appraisal procedures
- 4405 other professional service and employment factors concerned with increasing women's participation

Other

- 4501 no response
- 4502 don't know
- 4503 don't understand the question
- 4504 other

Overall response to Ques. 4

- 4601 supports the current participation of women
- 4602 seeks greater participation of women
- 4603 believes women have too much involvement in the Church
- 4604 includes passages suitable for quotation
- 4605 provides an example of a significant submission

Appendix 4: 2013 Scottish Survey Statistical Charts

Figure 1 Gender of respondents

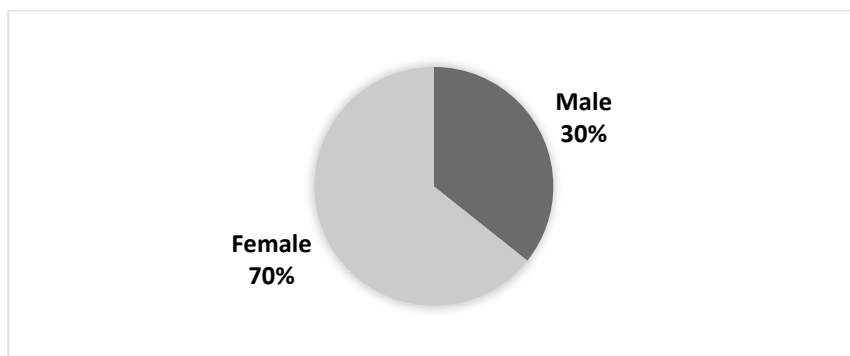


Figure 2 Age profile of respondents

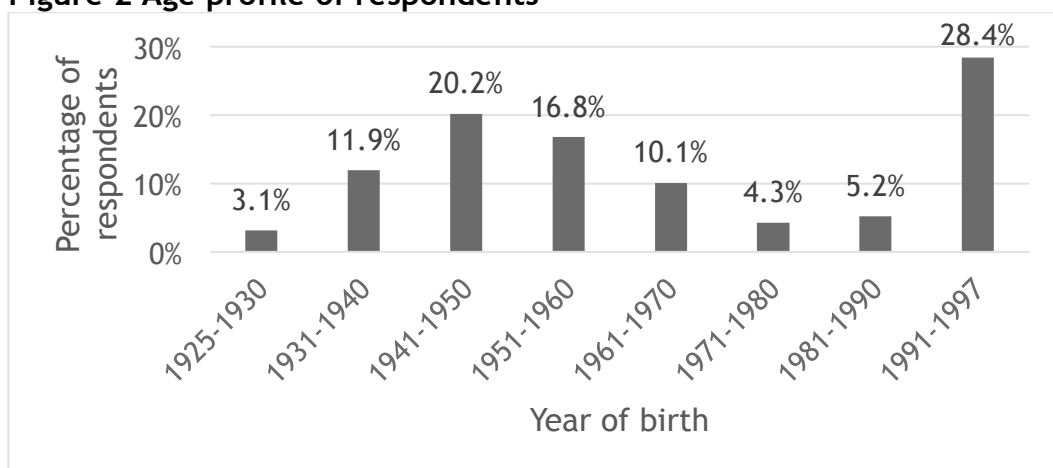


Figure 3 State of life of respondents

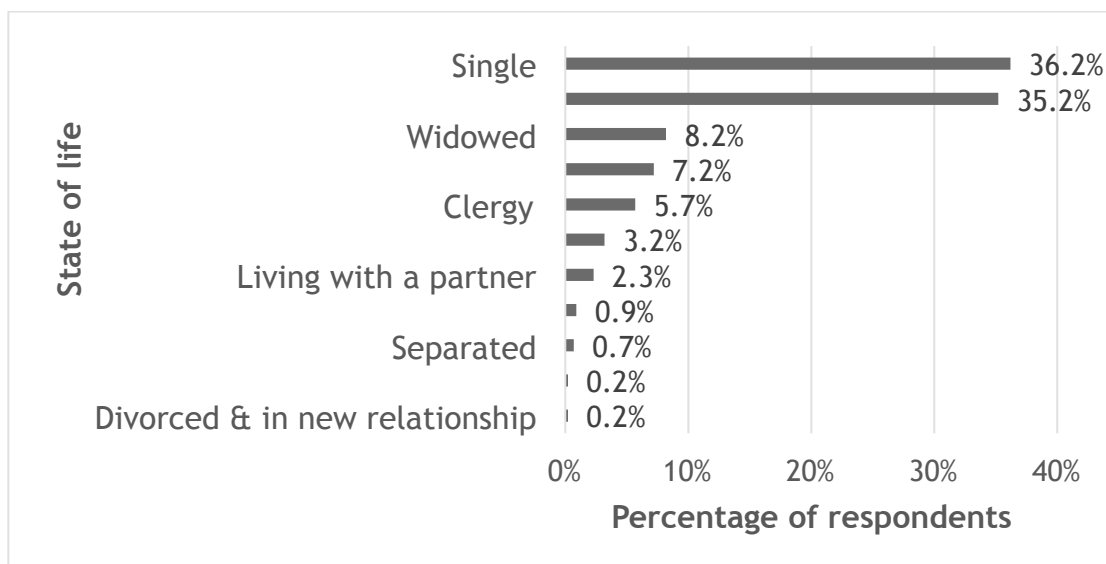


Figure 4 State of life - comparison by gender

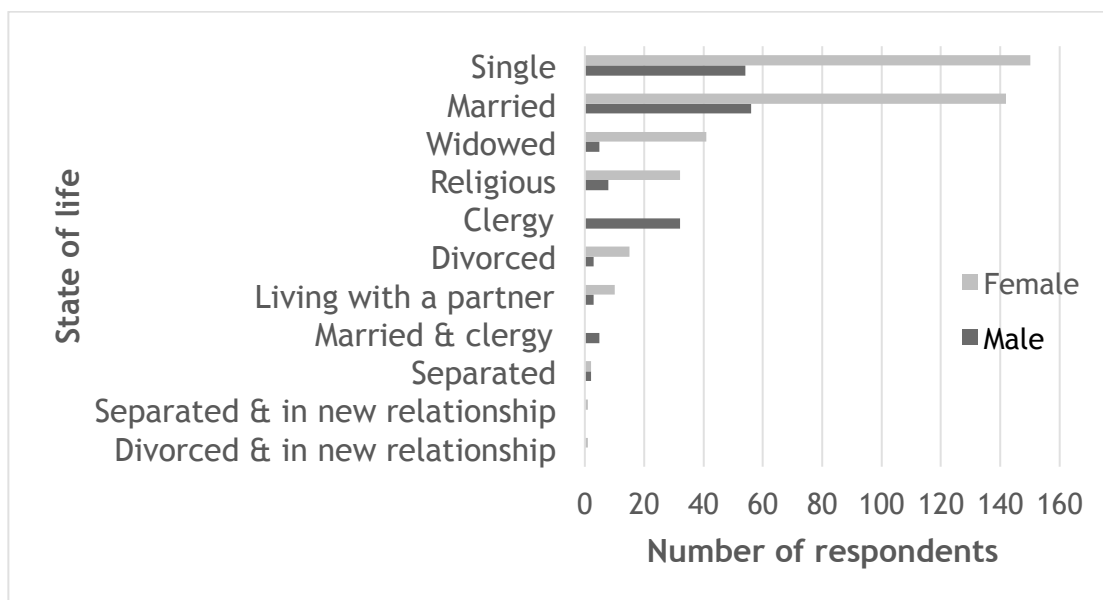


Figure 5 Place of residence

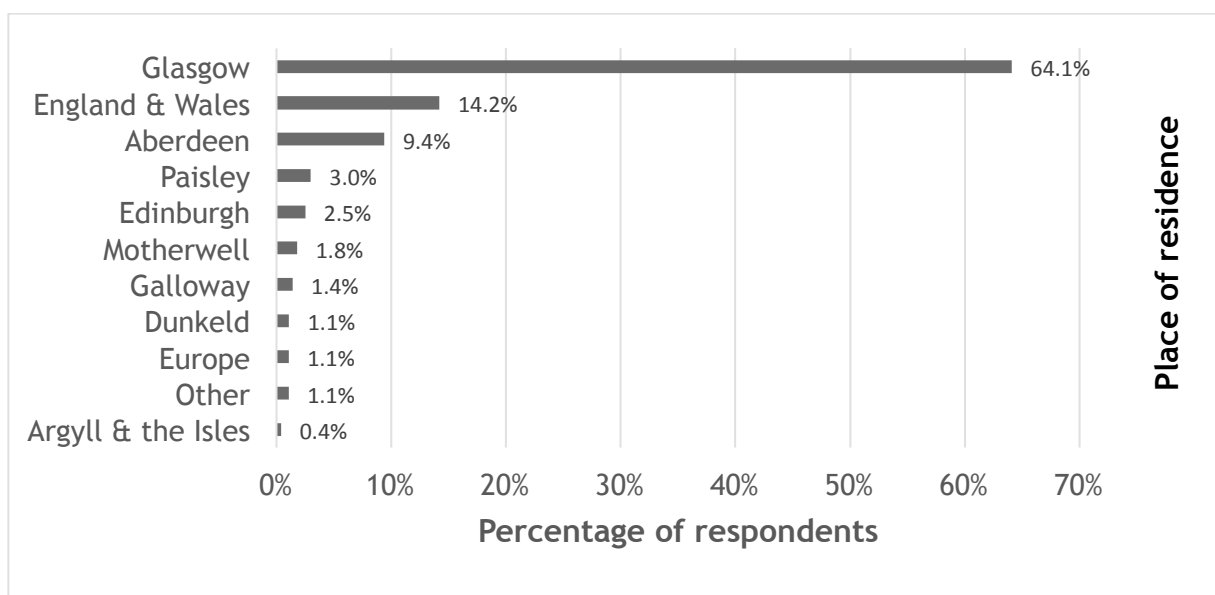


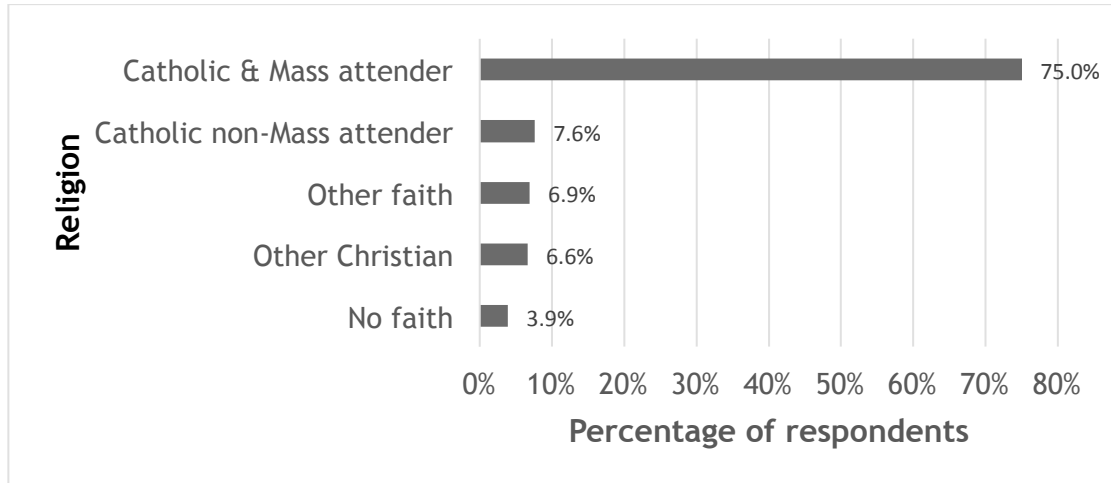
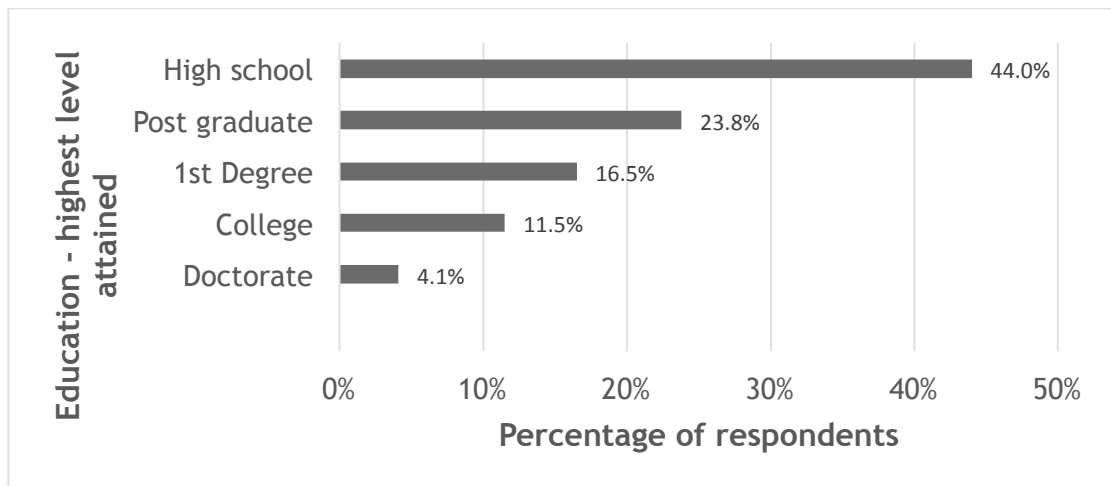
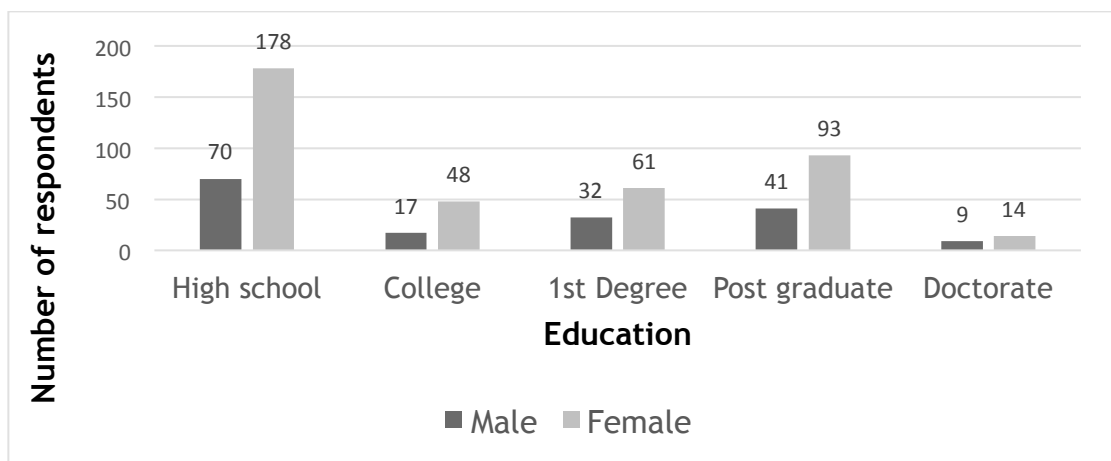
Figure 6 Religion of respondents**Figure 7 Education - highest level attained****Figure 8 Education - comparison by gender**

Figure 9 Occupation of respondent

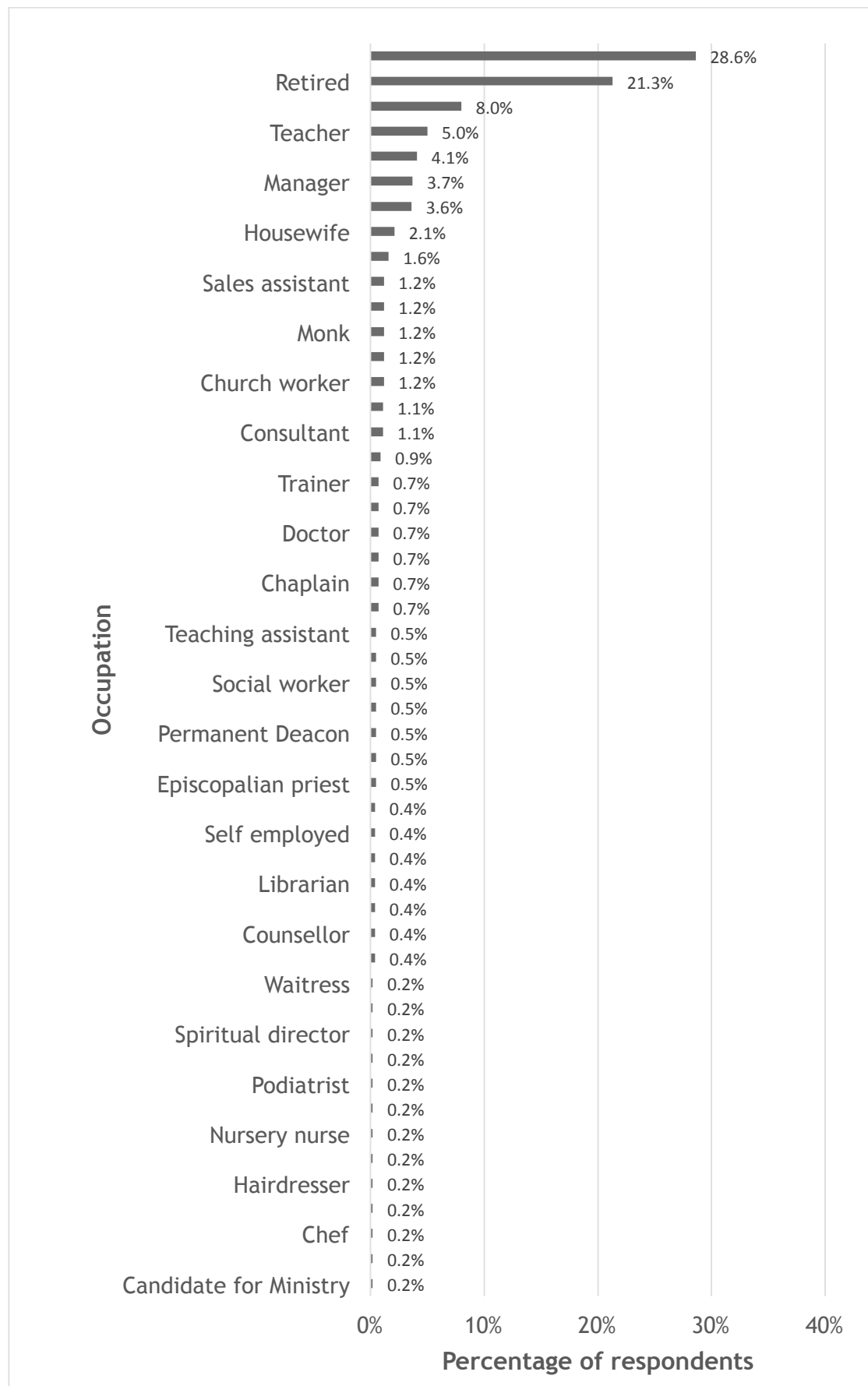


Figure 10 Do you feel a strong sense of belonging to your parish?

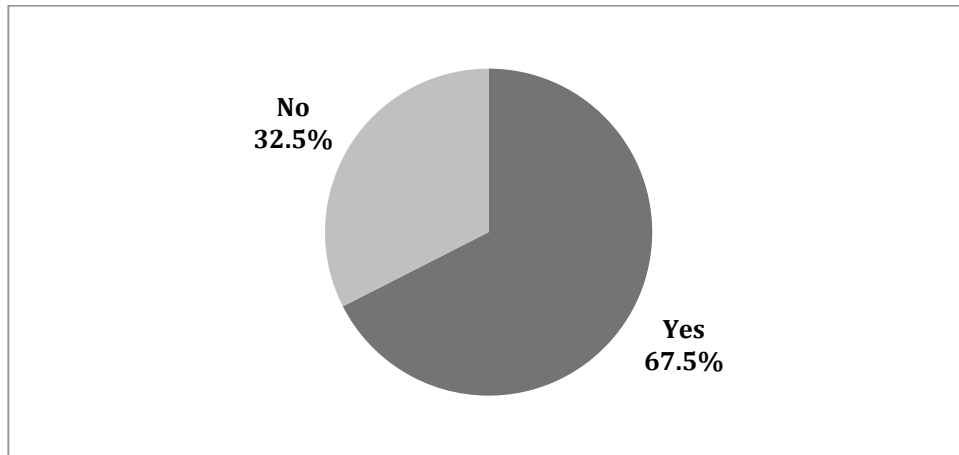


Figure 11 Are you actively involved in your parish?

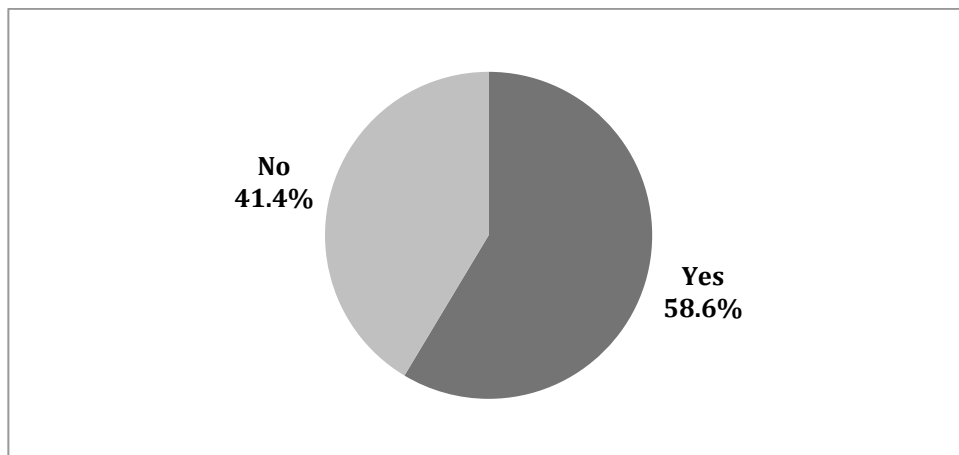


Figure 12 Have you ever taken up education/training offered by/for the Church?

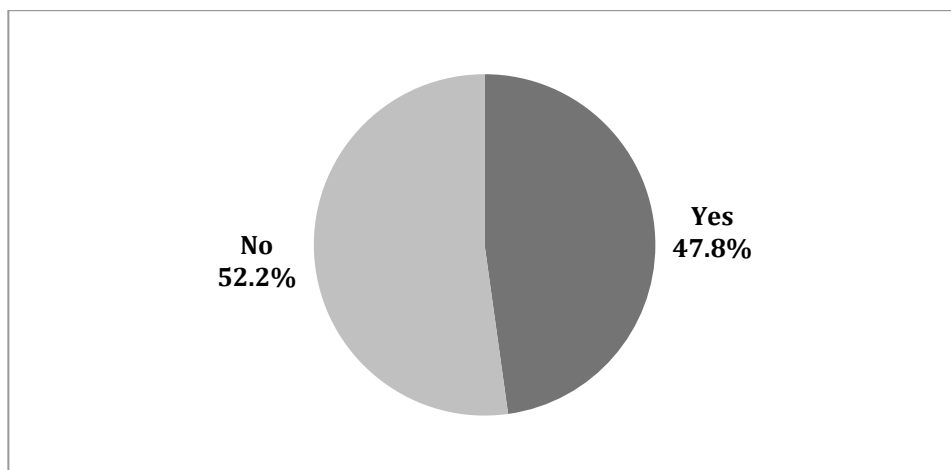


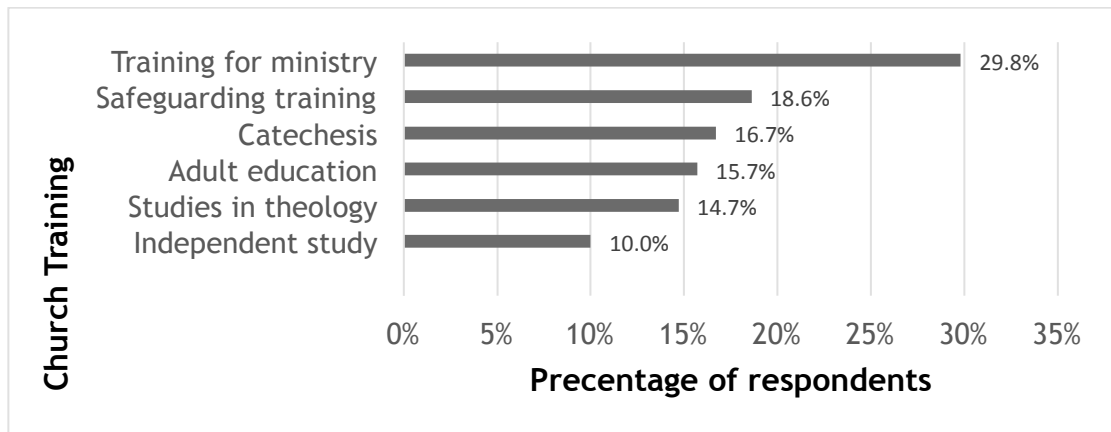
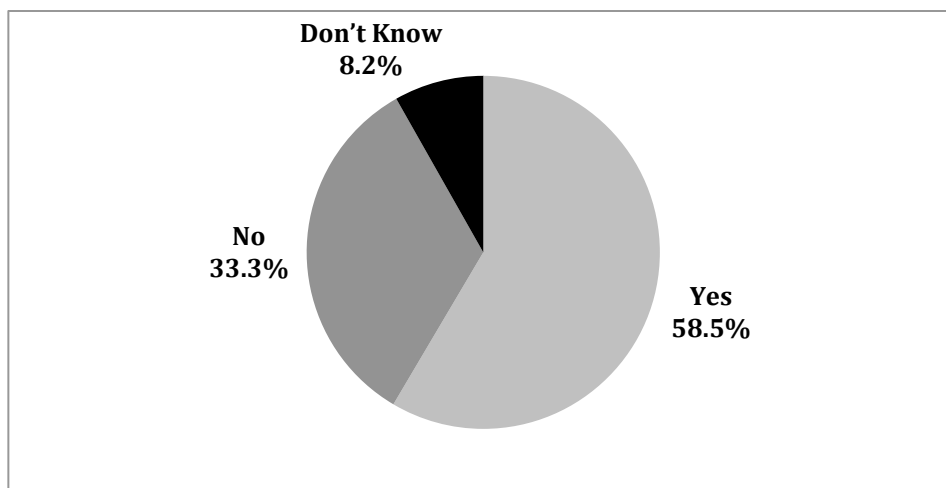
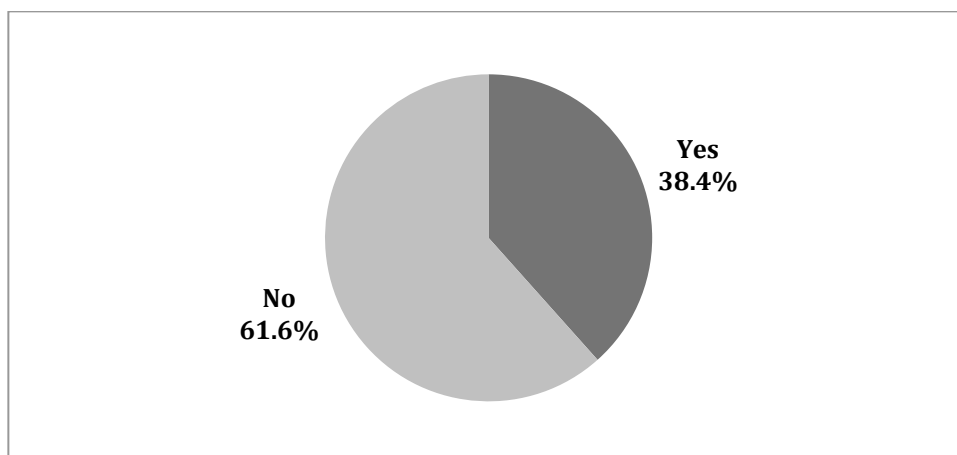
Figure 13 Church Training**Figure 14 Do you think that laymen and women are equally given opportunities to participate in Church life?****Figure 15 Have you - or anyone you personally know - ever felt excluded from participation in the Church?**

Figure 16 Have you - or anyone you personally know - ever felt excluded from participation in the Church?

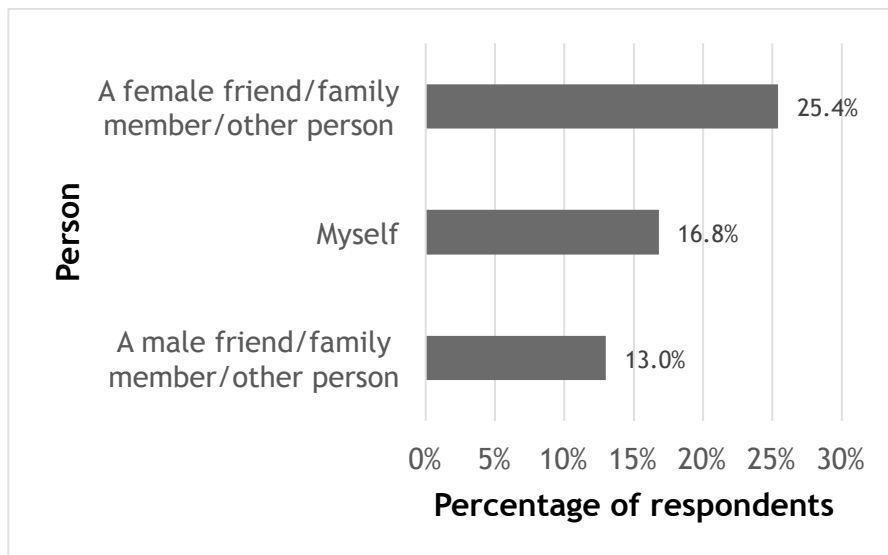


Figure 17 Some say there are barriers to lay participation in the Church - have you - or anyone you know - experienced any of these?

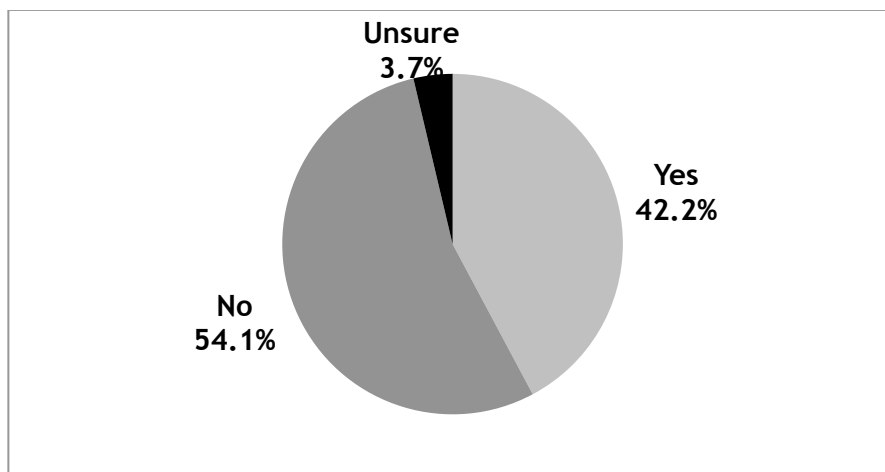


Figure 18 Some say there are barriers to lay participation in the Church - have you - or anyone you know - experienced any of these?

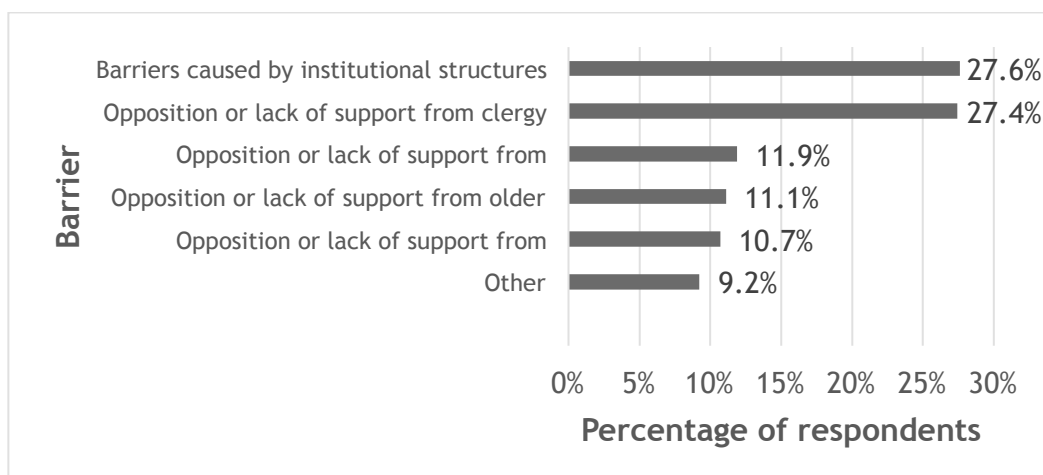


Figure 19 In your opinion, what support do laymen and women currently receive to enable them to participate in Church life?

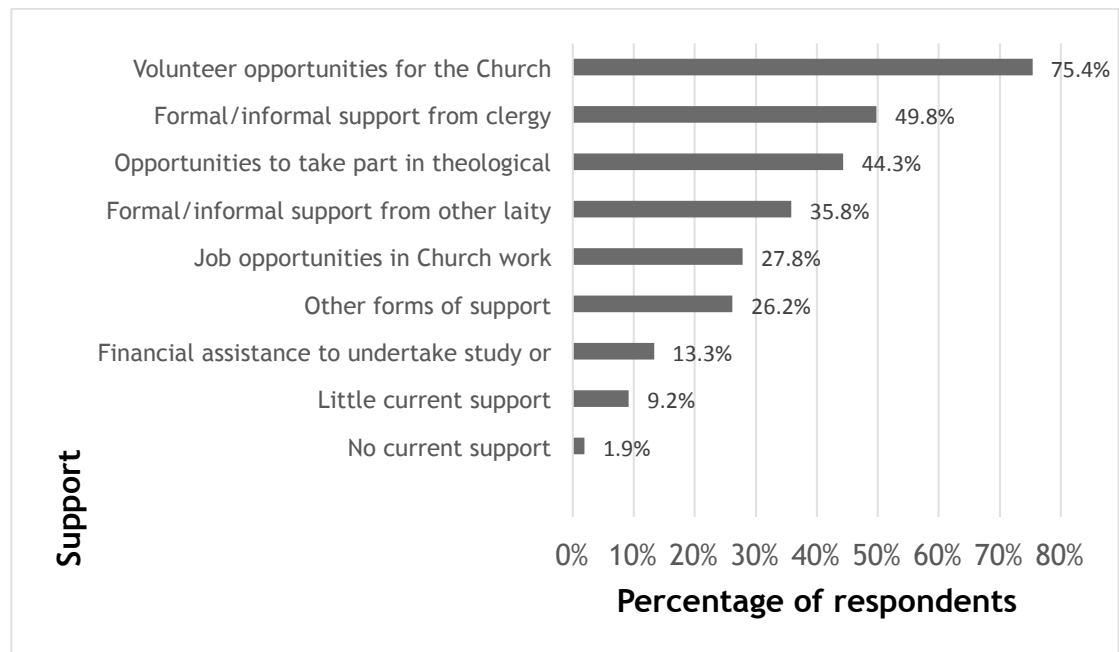


Figure 20 Do you think using inclusive language would be helpful in promoting the equality of men and women?

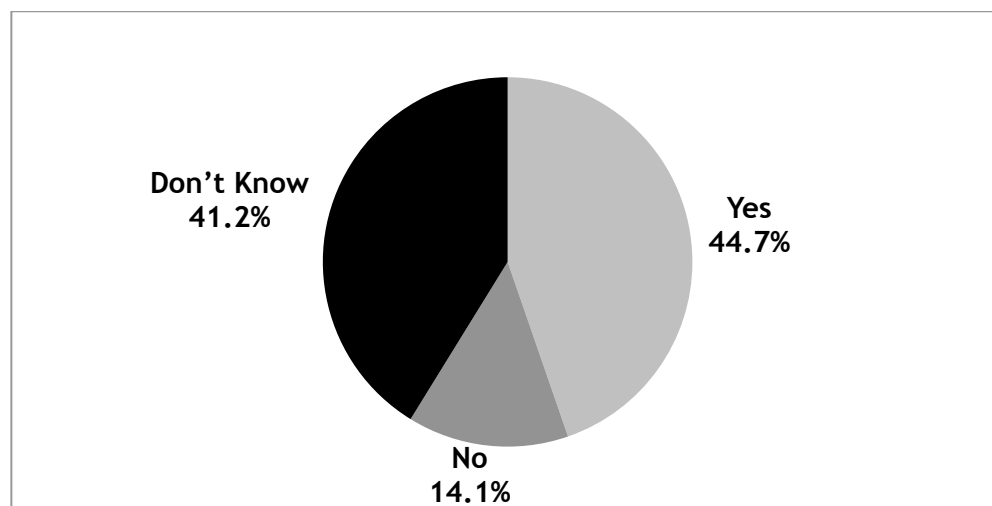


Figure 21 What do you think might help laity participate more in Church life?

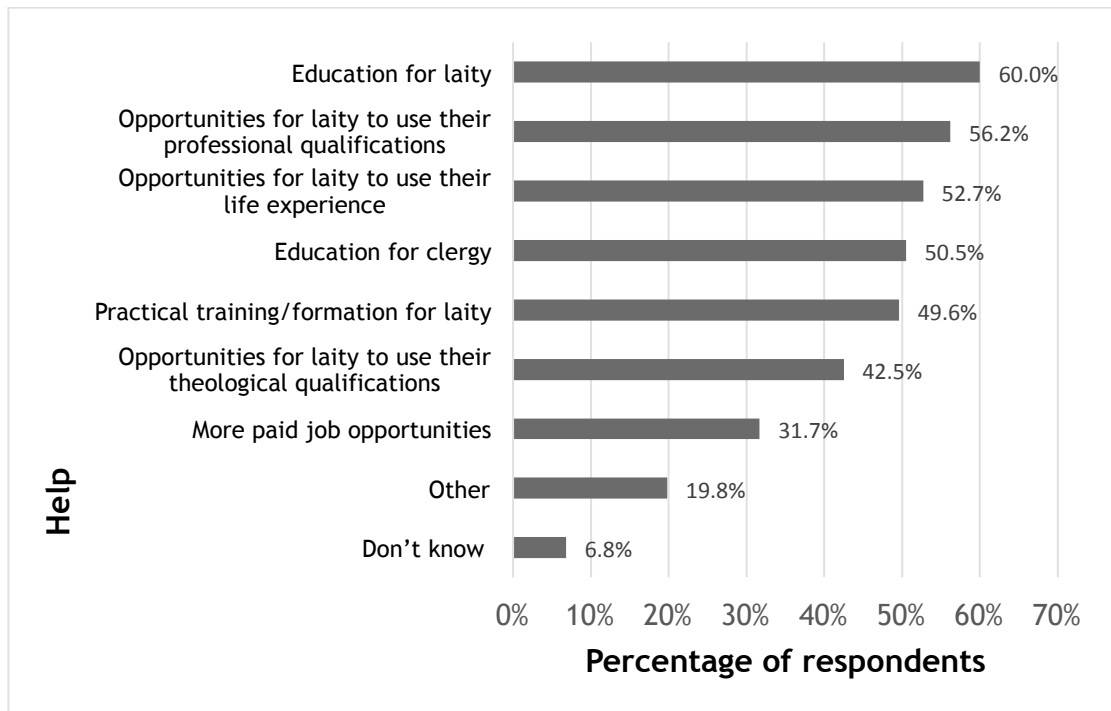


Figure 22 Some say there are specific barriers to the participation of women in the Church - have you - or women you know - experienced any of these?

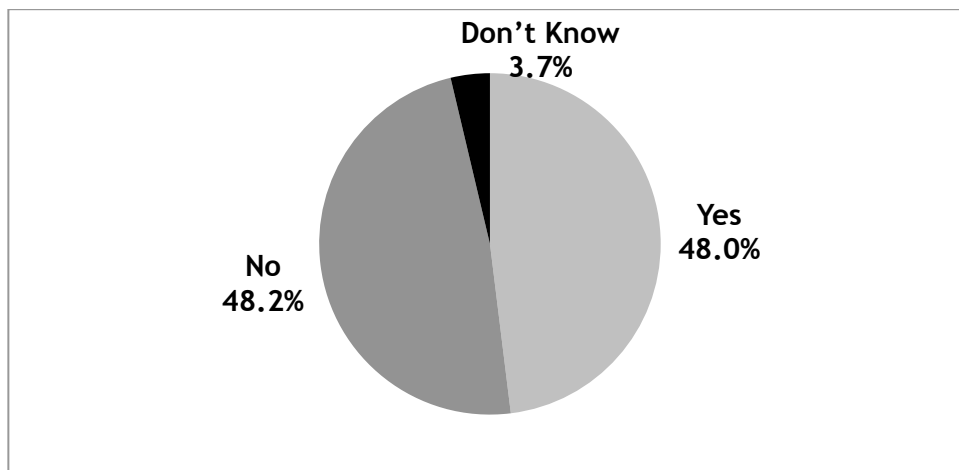


Figure 23 Some say there are specific barriers to the participation of women in the Church - have you - or women you know - experienced any of these?

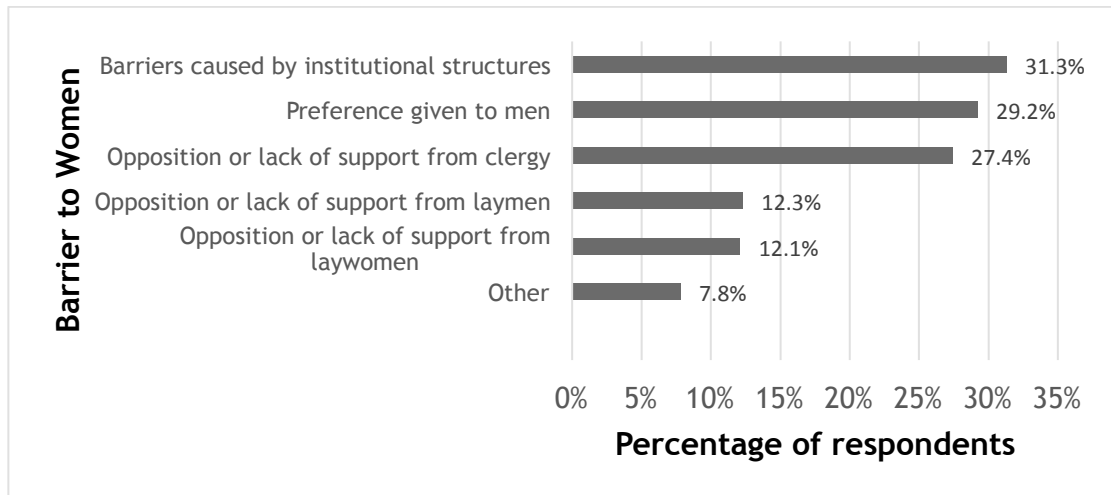


Figure 24 What do you think would be the most effective ways to increase the participation of women in the Church?

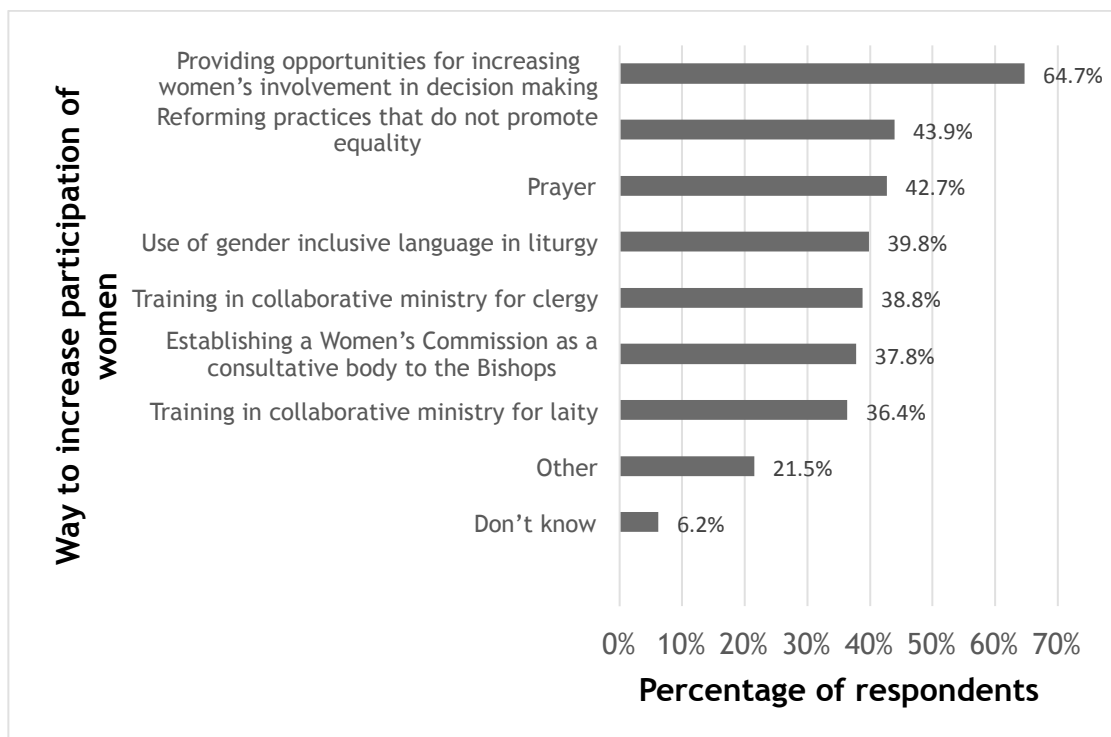


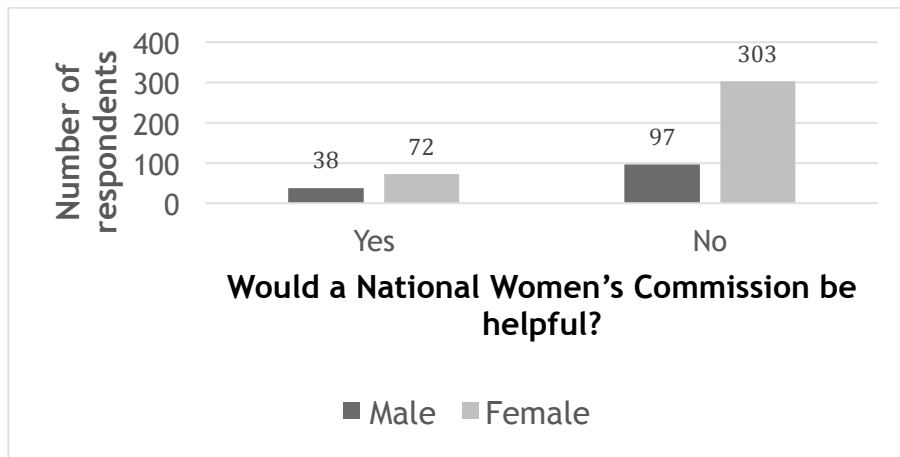
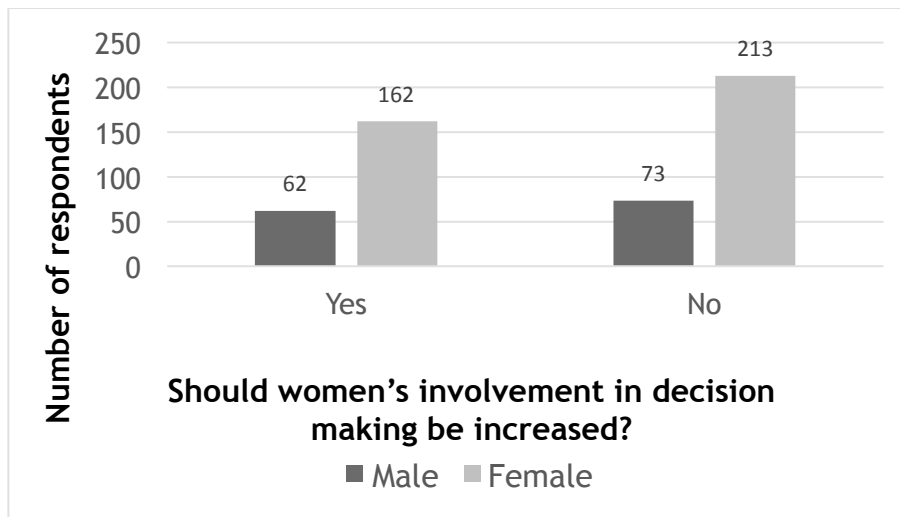
Figure 25 Would a National Women's Commission be helpful?**Figure 26 Should women's involvement in decision making be increased?**

Figure 27 Pope Benedict recently said that ‘the laity in the Church should be considered not as “collaborators” with the clergy, but as persons truly “co-responsible” for the being and activity of the Church’. How can laity exercise this co-responsibility?

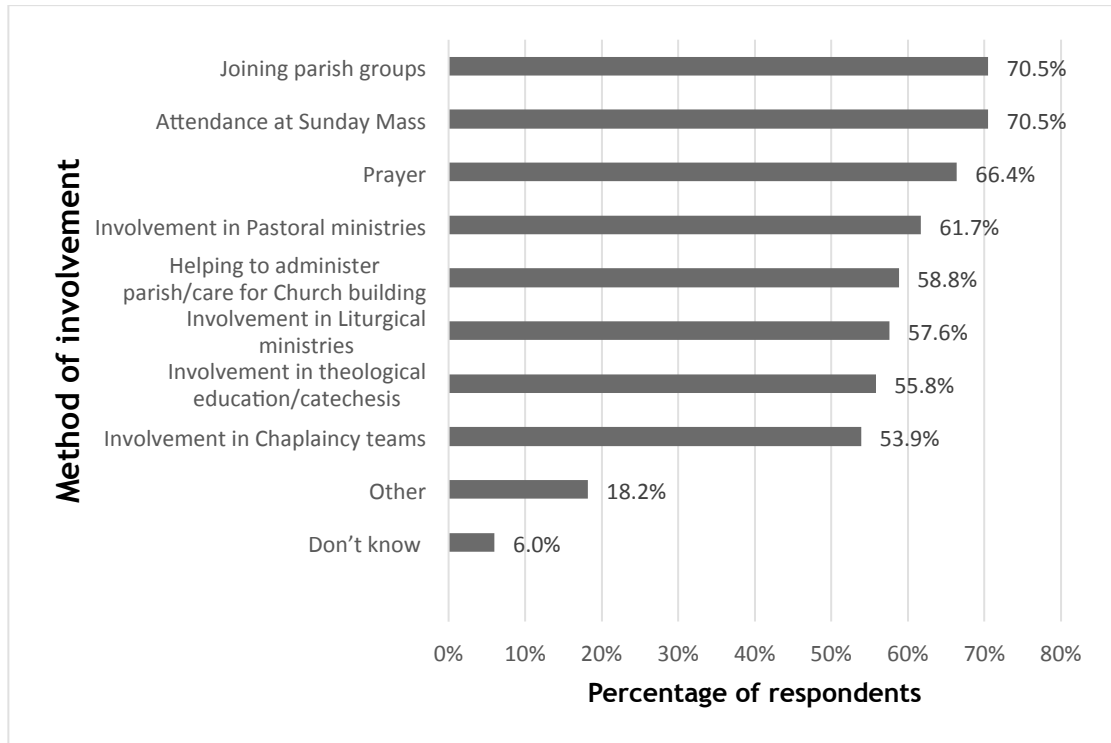


Figure 28 Question 6: Some say there are barriers to lay participation in the Church - have you - or anyone you know - experienced any of these?

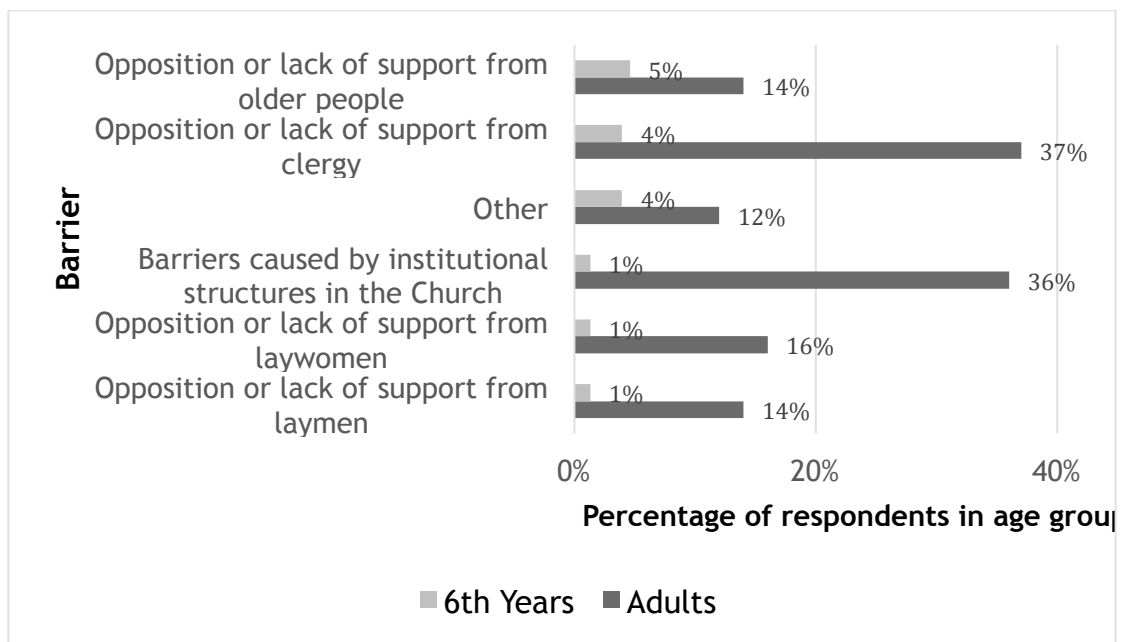


Figure 29 Question 10: Some say there are specific barriers to the participation of women in the Church - have you - or women you know - experienced any of these?

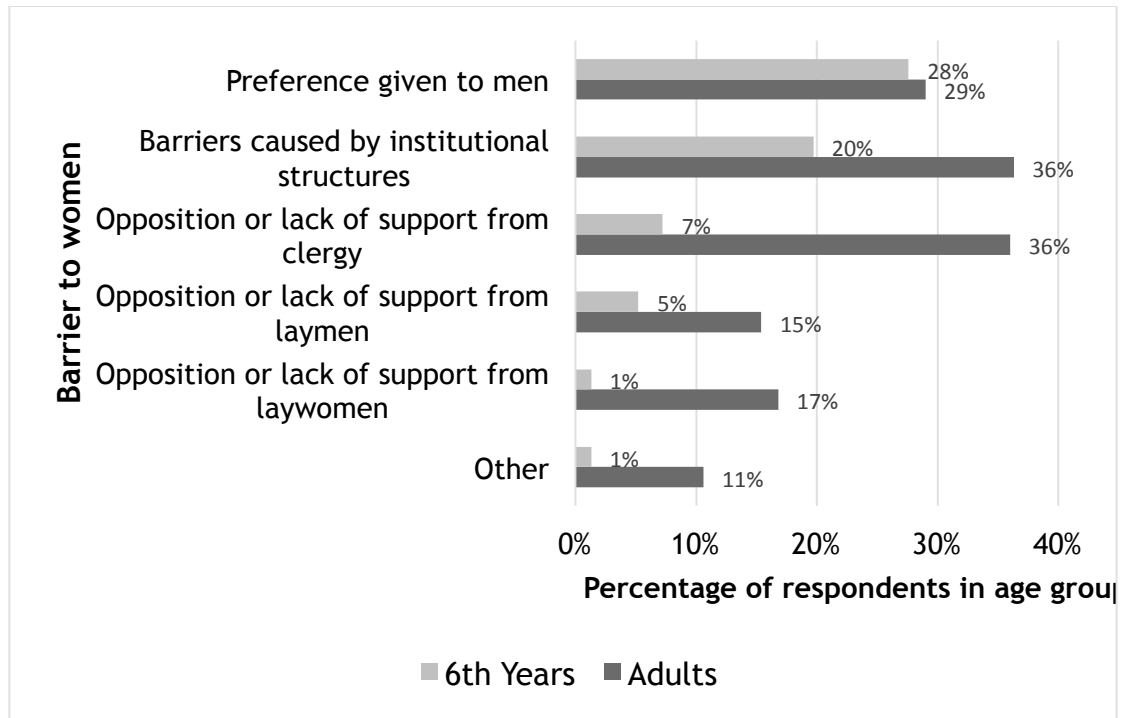


Figure 30 Question 11: What do you think would be the most effective ways to increase the participation of women in the Church?

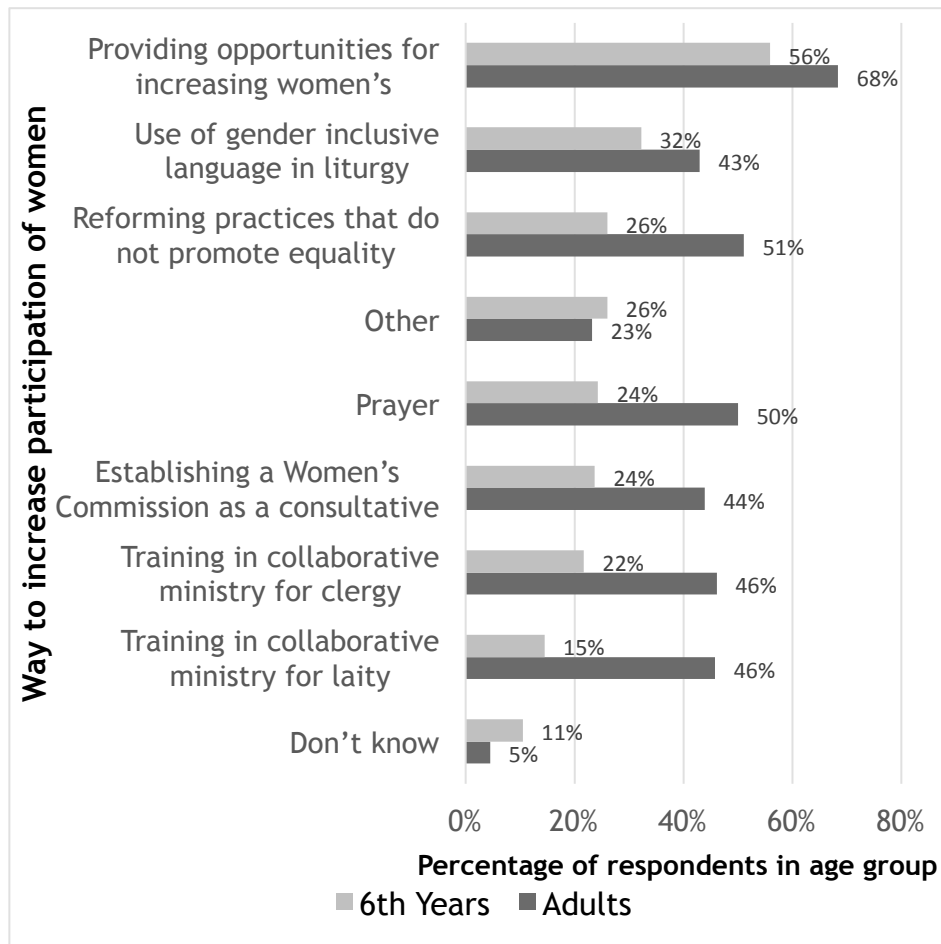


Figure 31 Question 12: Pope Benedict recently said that ‘the laity in the Church should be considered not as “collaborators” with the clergy, but as persons truly “co-responsible” for the being and activity of the Church’. How can laity exercise this co-responsibility?

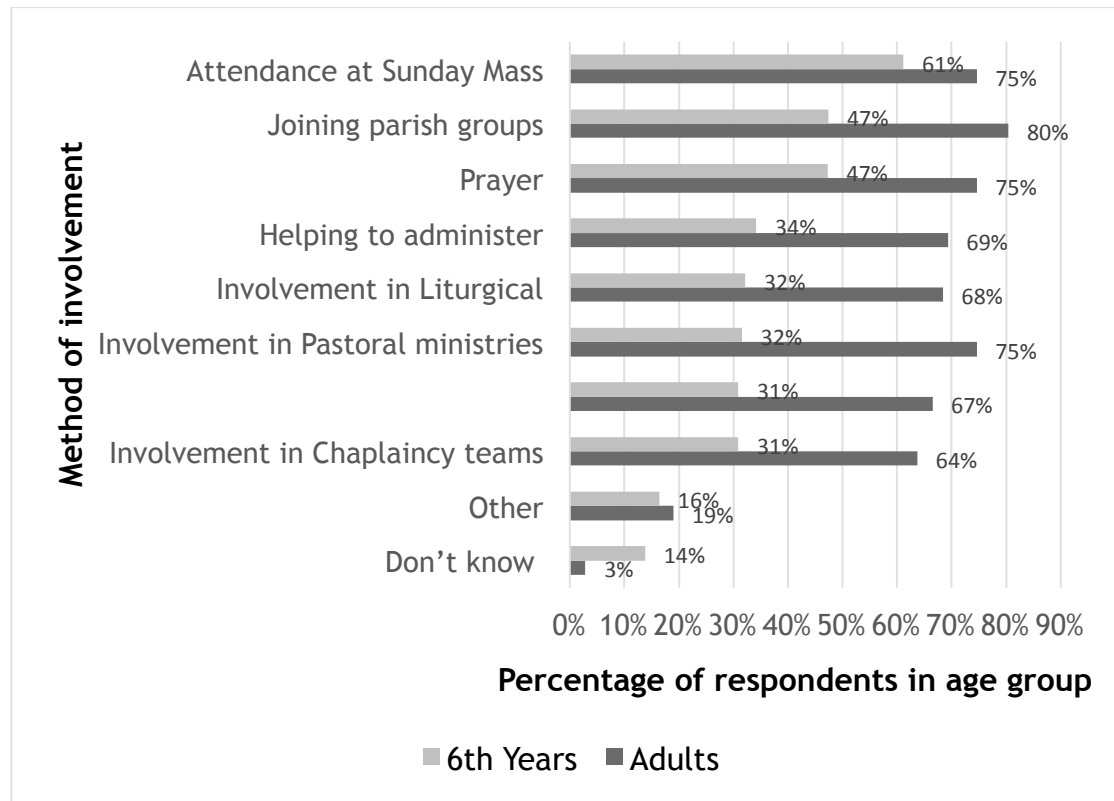


Figure 32 Gender of written respondents

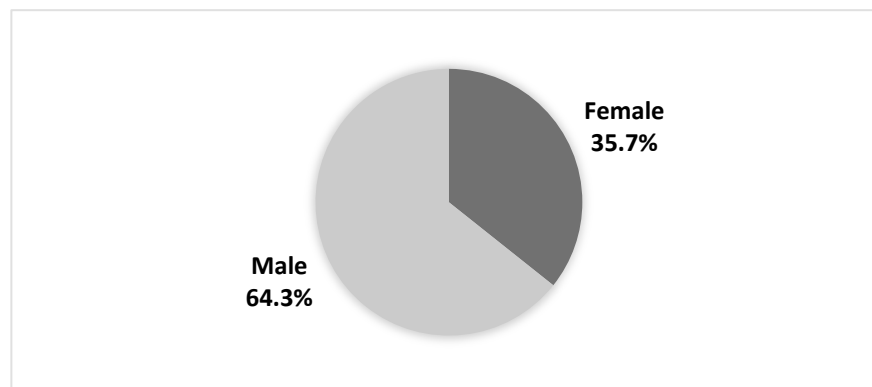


Figure 33 Occupation of written respondents

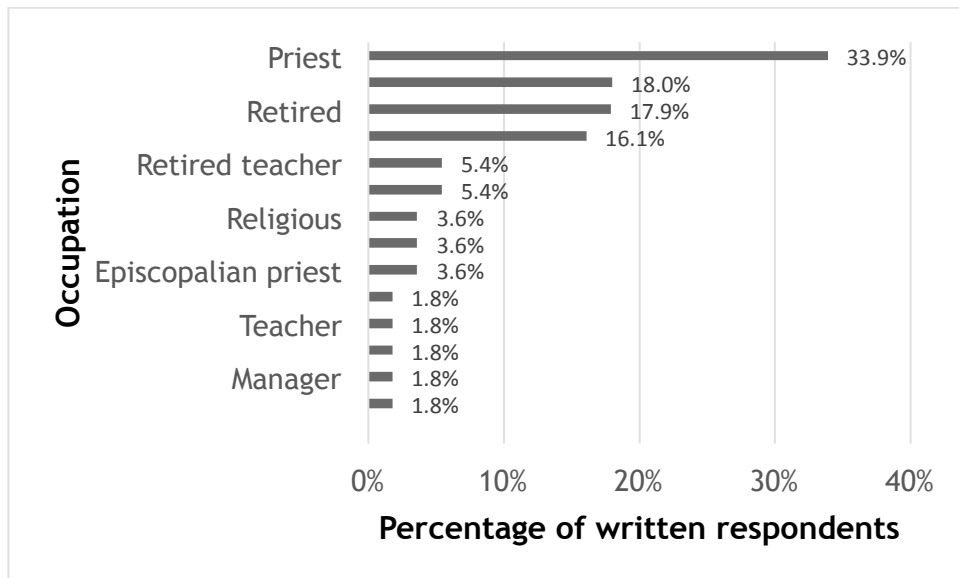


Figure 34 Current participation of women

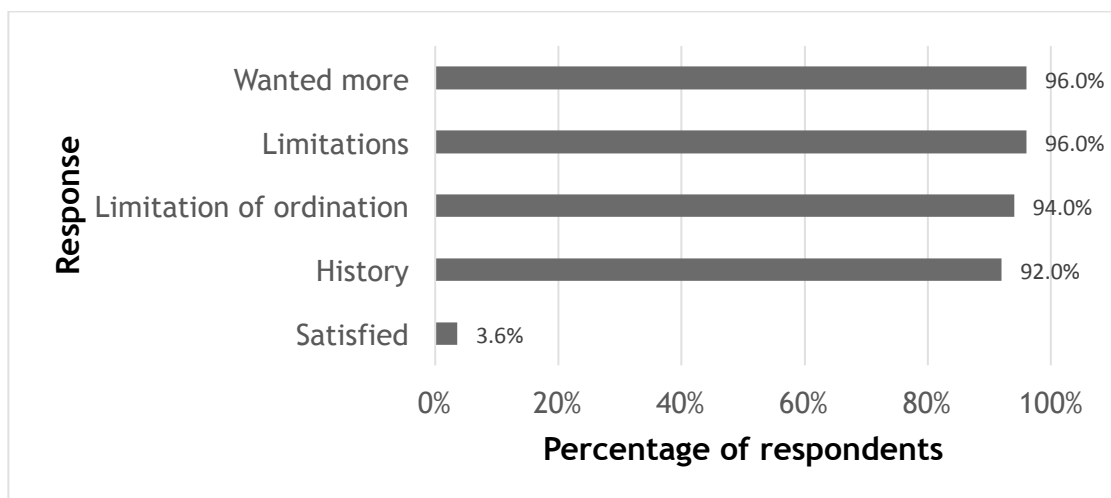


Figure 35 Support for women

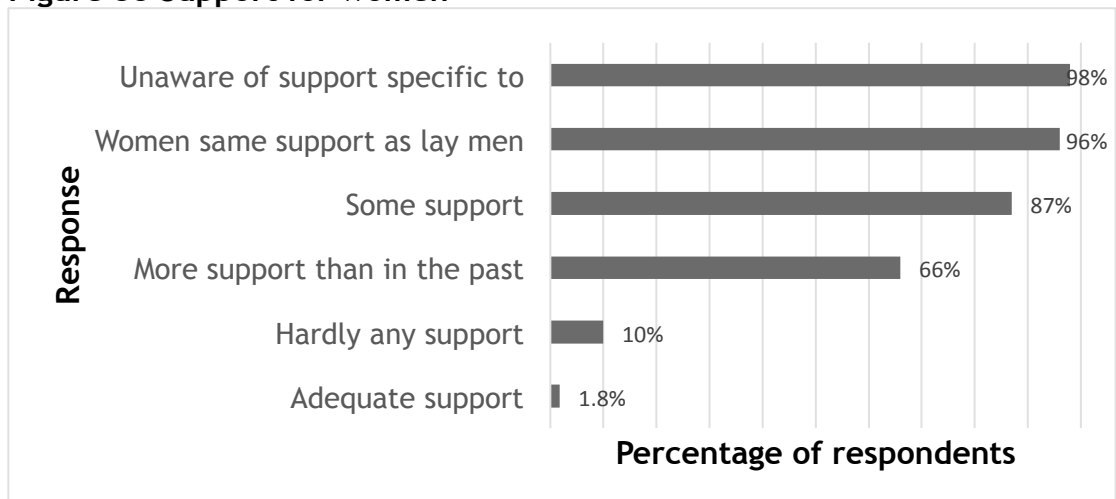
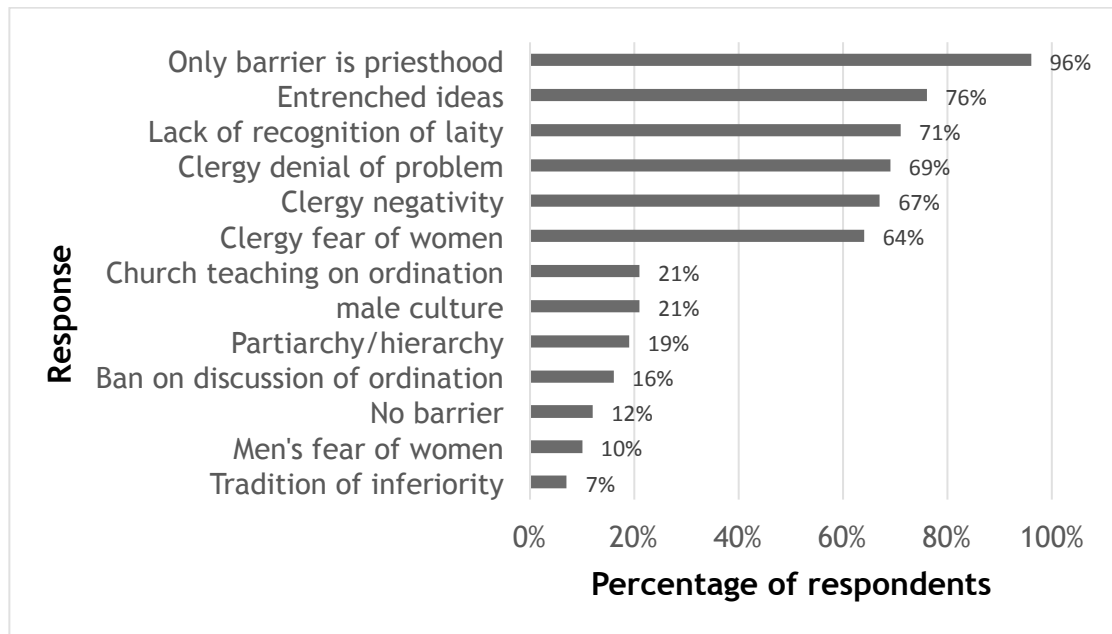
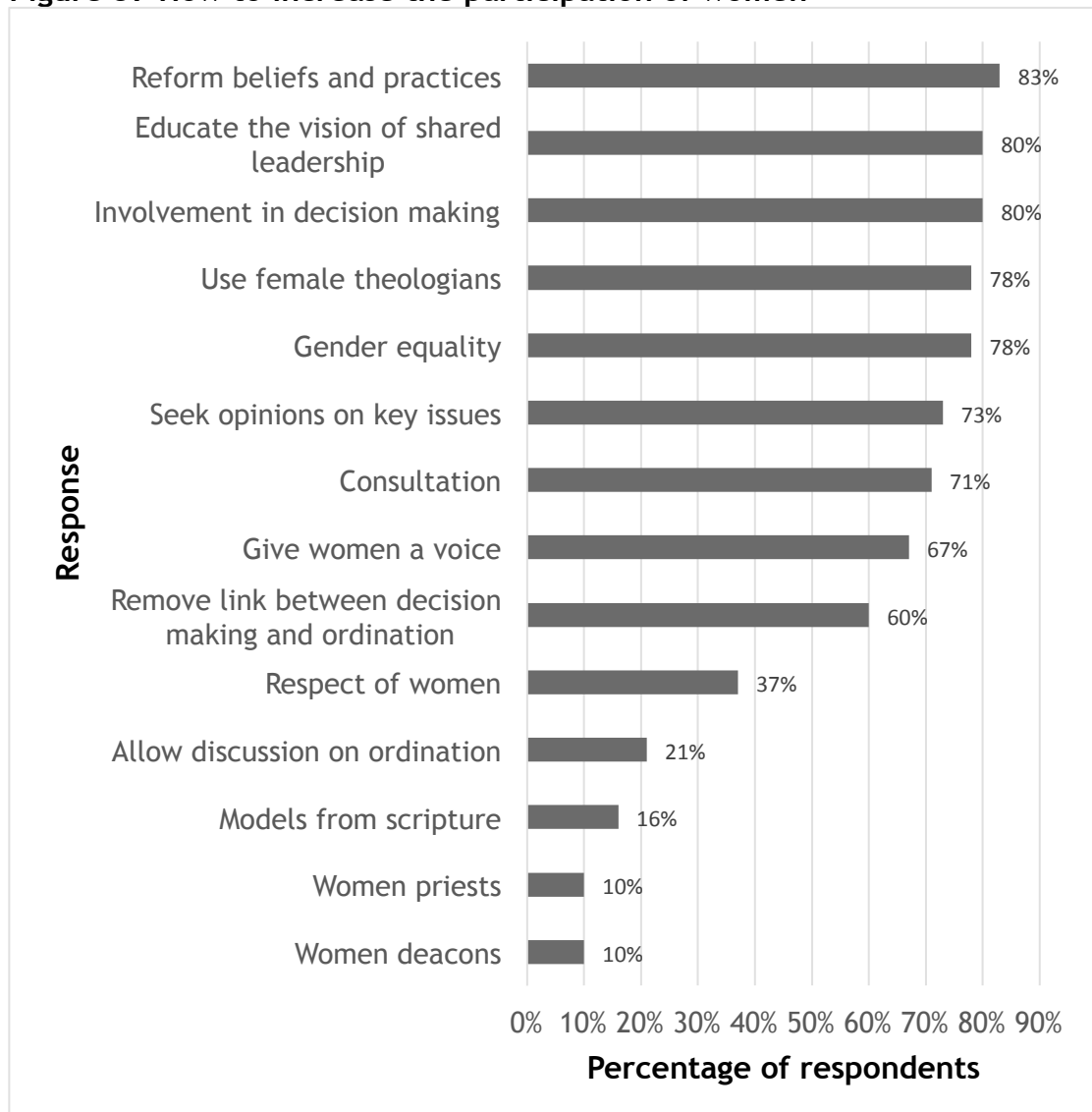


Figure 36 Barriers to women's participation**Figure 37 How to increase the participation of women**

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