

## NEWSLETTER



Dear CWC members,

*Pentecost is a feast charged by liberative energies! The life-giving pulsations of the Spirit, Ruah-Sophia invites us to breath in Her freshness and vitality and be renewed as She is constantly at work in the task of renewing the face of the earth. For us women, as we celebrate another Pentecost, it is an occasion to take stock of the forces that continue to enslave us from within and from the outside, and take constructive steps on the path of becoming free as persons and as collectives.*

*With great joy we share this new newsletter in which we review our experiences throughout the 2025-2026 academic year. A year full of activities for reflection and activism on the long road to women's liberation, dignity and equality.*



# Listening sessions 2025-2026

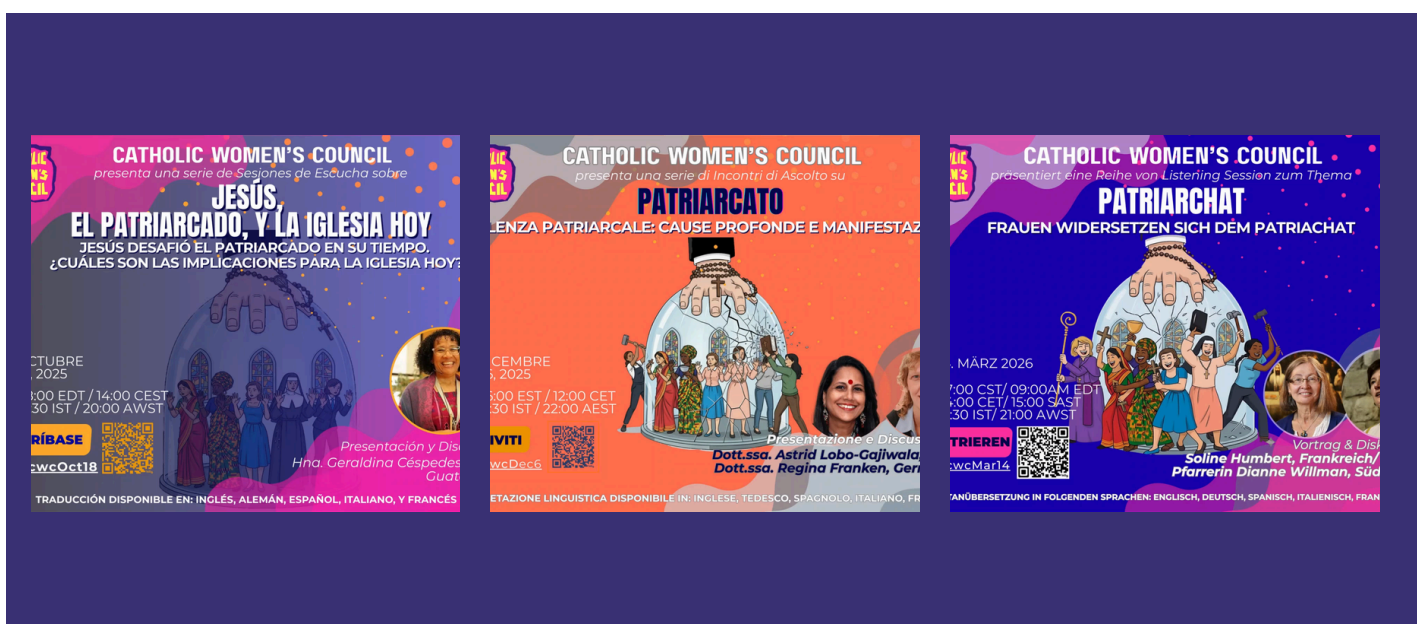
It is within this framework of the quest for equality, freedom and justice that we situated the series of listening sessions of Catholic Women’s Council (CWC) on Patriarchy. These sessions give expression to the strong commitment on the part of CWC to collaborate with the Spirit in the mission of liberating women from the clutches of patriarchy as evident in our lives today.

While the patriarchal culture is not manifested in a uniform manner in the different parts of this world, the diverse ways in which the tentacles of patriarchy permeate into the fabric of a given society or community, make it an unceasingly intense issue that distorts the existence of women, the earth and life at large.

What then is patriarchy and why is it so difficult to put an end to it? To put it in very simple terms, patriarchy is a system that privileges men’s interests and choices over and above that of women and of other humans who are taken to be of an inferior in status for being different.

The ‘male privilege’ that is a characteristic feature of patriarchy is about how power is exercised in the public and the domestic domain. For this reason, the term ‘patriarchy’ that translates literally as ‘rule of the father’ has become a culture that is deeply ingrained into the economic, political, religious, legal and other socio-cultural systems that govern the life of humans and that of the earth. All the same, the experience of patriarchy varies in the different contexts,, depending on the intersectionality of gender with diverse factors that define human identity like ethnicity, class, race, religion, caste and the like.

As an analytical category, while the term patriarchy is critically deployed to unpack the key constituents of authority and power in any social system, this does not mean that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of





rights, influences and resources. Nor does it counterpose men as oppressors and women as victims. Patriarchal power operates eliciting women's consent, beguiling them with its social myths and rituals, and implicating them in its workings. Cultural and sexual norms constitute the everyday contexts for the exercise of patriarchal power and generally women are active collaborators of a system that dominates them.

The hegemonic grip of patriarchal power is most evident in the way gender roles are prescribed, as patriarchy rests on defined notions of the masculine and feminine. Both women and men tend to perform uncritically the stereotyped gendered roles expected of them and this serves to sustain patriarchy in the domestic space of the family and in the public sphere.

Religions are the major mediators of patriarchy as they serve to legitimize patriarchal oppression in overt and covert ways. For us Catholic women, the religious mediation of patriarchy is a felt experience as we belong to a Church that vehemently upholds a patriarchal ideology in its theology and in the praxis of ministry.

In this context, CWC offered a platform for women to engage in critical discussions on the implications of patriarchy in our personal and collective lives

In the first listening session on Patriarchy animated by Sr Geraldina Cespedes Ulloa OP (Dominican Republic), we pondered on Jesus, Patriarchy and the Church Today. She showed how Jesus confronted and overturned the patriarchal tables consistently through his words and liberative interventions in the lives of women who were exploited, suppressed and overlooked. And the Spirit invites us today to become a prophetic voice like Jesus and subvert oppressive structures that are founded on patriarchal ideologies that women may experience freedom from its shackles.

The 2nd listening session on Patriarchal Violence: Root Causes and Manifestations animated by Dr. Regina Franken (Germany) and Dr. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala (India) explored into the layers of violence mediated by the patriarchal ideology particularly within the sphere of religion and in our experience as members of the Church. In the light of the persisting patriarchal violence, which is a lived experience for women all over the world, especially in

the religious realm, the Spirit, who is Sophia- the Wisdom of God invites us to be friends of God and prophets by becoming Her voice that challenges abuse and any form of oppression. Then, women and all who are subjugated become free to enjoy the liberty of God's children, wherever they are. In the 3rd listening session on Women Resisting Patriarchy, Soline Humbert (France/Ireland) and Dianne Willman (South Africa) delved on the question of resistance to patriarchal norms and inscriptions mediated by religion, by sharing their experiences of speaking truth to power, which is a powerful tool for dismantling the patriarchal scaffolding that is strong within the framework of Christianity. Their assertions invite us to hear the voice of Spirit-Sophia challenging us to become free and true to who we are and what we are becoming so that we become embodiments of Her liberative presence in the world today.

**Pentecost is a cracking moment. This feast of the Spirit calls us to come out of the patriarchal mould and break every yoke that continues to subjugate us humans and the earth. By getting freed from the fetters of patriarchy, we become the presence of Spirit Sophia, who will continue Her prophetic mission in and through us. Are we ready to embody Her liberative presence in the Church and in the world today? This is the challenge posed by this feast of the Pentecost!**

*Kochurani Abraham  
CWC Executive member*



# MAGDALENA CENT PROJECT

At Pentecost, the apostles—who had been unsettled by the death of Jesus—were filled with the Holy Spirit. From that moment on, they possessed the courage and the ability to speak in all languages in order to carry the message of Jesus Christ into the world. That is why, Pentecost is regarded as the “birthday of the Church.”



Since 2020, the Catholic Women’s Council (CWC), as a global movement, has been making the voices of women heard in just as many languages. The CWC encourages women to raise their voices for a sisterly Catholic Church, advocating #EqualDignityEqualRights for all people.

## Securing financial resources

In addition to the women who volunteer on the Executive Board and the Board of the supporting association, financial resources are needed for speakers, professional translators, technicians, and communications specialists. Therefore, the Board of the supporting association—responsible for the legal and financial foundation of the CWC—has developed the following vision:

The CWC is supported ideologically and financially by individuals and organizations worldwide. In the spirit of Mary Magdalene, the Apostle to the Apostles, we as women in the CWC are engaged in apostolic work and advocate for #EqualDignityEqualRights. To this end, the MAGDALENA CENT is being introduced, which will provide financial momentum for the CWC.



The MAGDALENA CENT, inspired by the “Peter’s Pence” (Latin: Denarius Sancti Petri), will be collected annually worldwide as an offering during church services in parishes, religious orders, associations, federations, and organizations, or as individual donations. Unlike the Peter’s Pence, the MAGDALENA CENT supports the work of active women in the Catholic Church who are committed to #EqualDignityEqualRights. The fund is administered by the CWC supporting association and used to further its aims, goals and tasks.

We call on you to strengthen the CWC movement financially through the MAGDALENA CENT, so that it can continue to grow and spread the vision of #EqualDignityEqualRights. A press release has been prepared for this purpose. We ask you to send it to the media and church decision-makers in your country. Please download the press release and send it to your press contacts:

[www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/mcpresrelease](http://www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/mcpresrelease)

Contact Magdalena Cent: [www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/contactmagdalenacent](http://www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/contactmagdalenacent)

Flyer Magdalena Cent: [www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/magdalenacentdownloads](http://www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/magdalenacentdownloads)

Donate to Magdalena Cent: [www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/magdalenacentdonate](http://www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/magdalenacentdonate)

# News from our members

## Root & Branch - UK

There are very few active reform groups working in the UK and **Root & Branch** is determined to make sure that making the church a safe, just and inclusive place where all are welcome stays firmly on the agenda.

Over the past year we have worked to offer a place where people who have been harmed by the church and church related organisation can break their silence. Our international community has grown with us, and this is a source of great joy.

I will highlight two of the ways we strove to break through the silence surrounding the reality of women's position in the church, one from 2025 and one from 2026.

### 'Papabile women'



To coincide with the election of a new pope, and the speculation about the likely candidates, we turned the conversation around to spotlight women from all over the world with the magnificent gifts all of whom are electable, or in the church's language, 'papabile' within a transformed leadership. They have all made their mark as strong women leaders. Many of these women will be familiar to you as women who work tirelessly for women's equality and for the Catholic Women's Council.



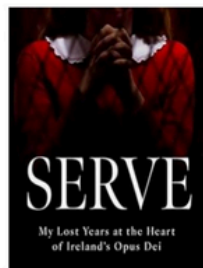
### Opus Dei uncovered



A frightened and exhausted Anne Marie Allen, aged 15, a few weeks after she joined Opus Dei.



Anne Marie Allen today.



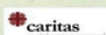
In early 2026 we turned our attention to the coercive control and other abuses women experience as members of the international lay organisation Opus Dei. Anne Marie Allen, a former assistant numerary and author of 'Serve. My Lost years at the Heart of Ireland's Opus Dei' described her years of misery in slavery, forced celibacy and traumatic physical suffering under an ambitious and tyrannical institution that demanded perfection, humiliation and pain. "I am speaking out so no other children will be accessed by Opus Dei EVER" Anne said.

### The Tablet & New Hall Festival 2026

Faith in Action: Justice, Peace & the Future of the Church  
10-11 July 2026 | New Hall,  
Boreham House, Chelmsford



For more details visit:  
[www.thetablet.co.uk/events](http://www.thetablet.co.uk/events)



The Tablet, the well-known and internationally respected Catholic weekly, is holding a Festival on 10 and 11 July and we're delighted that Root & Branch have been invited to participate. Several of the core team will be taking part in panel discussion or running workshops on aspects of Justice and Peace and Women, Leadership and the Future of Ministry.

Mary Varley

UK CWC Executive Member

Member of Root & Branch core team

[www.rootbranch.org](http://www.rootbranch.org)

## Revuelta de Mujeres en la Iglesia - Spain

The purple of Lent announces the presence of Lydia, the woman in purple, the hostess who invites us to traverse what is dead, violated, and wounded in order to recreate a new humanity. But purple is not always welcome in the Church, where equality is a utopia. Therefore, every year, on the first Sunday of March, believing and feminist women from different parts of Spain take to the streets, **stubbornly hopeful**, to demand equality **"until it becomes the norm."** Once again, since 2020, we have forced clericalism to widen the Church's tent so that we can all fit.

This year we have taken to the streets **in front of 33 cathedrals across Spain** as part of the **Revuelta de Mujeres en la Iglesia, Alcem la Veu, and Emakumeen Aldarria Elkarte**. Women, so often relegated to the domestic sphere, hidden and made invisible, on that day put our bodies on the line to engage in politics and theology in the streets. Flattered to decorate churches and clean

their premises with servility and modesty, yet scorned for sacralizing the bread, proclaiming the word, and leading communities and institutions, this year we took to the streets under the motto **"THIS IS MY BODY,"** proclaiming that **we are the Body of Christ, that we are the living Church.** Guided by **Eve** and **Mary of Nazareth**, we embarked on an unprecedented performance. Throughout the centuries, women have been forced into one of these two opposing categories: Mary or Eve. The image of both has been manipulated and **plasticized by patriarchy.** And within these images, we are all forced to choose: either pure, chaste, submissive, and silent like Mary, or disobedient, disloyal, sensual, and seductive like Eve. In our act, we wanted to show how Jesus approaches the bodies of all women today. Bodies wounded by the abuse of power, by clericalism, racism, and sexism, bodies that share the wounds of Christ. Jesus does justice to all of us, to all the Marys and Eves of the world.



Today, Jesus...

- Transforms our lives into a 'home' for humanity, like Eve: "And he called the woman Eve, the mother of all living creatures."
- Makes us bearers of salvation, like Mary of Nazareth: "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High."
- Touches our divergent and non-normative bodies, like the bent-over woman: "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity."
- Rescues us from the abyss of history, like the stoned woman: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you."
- Allows himself to be touched in order to draw us to the center of Life, like the woman with the hemorrhage: "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."
- He chooses us as heralds of the resurrected Life, like Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them: I have seen the Lord, HE LIVES!"

**We are all Marys, we are all Eves**, we are one, we are all, united in a **Magnificat** that proclaims with immense joy that you have noticed the humiliation of so many women, tearing down the pride of clericalism and patriarchy.

It was a day of celebration, in which we transformed the dark corridors of churches into open spaces that break down borders, and the domes of cathedrals into the heavens of a new Church. We do Theology in the open air because no one can drive us from the streets. We are a Church on the move, we do a Theology where dogmas crumble and we cry out "this is my body" to celebrate the Eucharist as women and break bread with all of vulnerable humanity.

Jesus of Nazareth draws near to us, in a delightful whisper, to remind us that we are one with Him. We receive His loving breath, because we are fed up with violence.

**María Frechilla Arbaiza**  
**Revolta de Mujeres en la Iglesia**



Alicante



Bilbao



Iruña



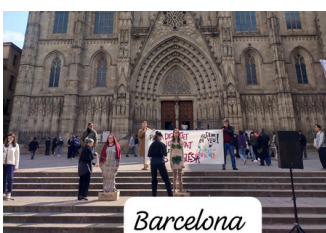
Donostia



Oviedo



Murcia



Barcelona



Valencia



## Mujeres e Iglesia - Chile

### 8M 2026 DECLARATION

This March 8th, we join in the commemoration of International Women's Day with the profound conviction that our faith is not neutral in the face of gender injustice. In a political and cultural context where conservative



discourses are resurfacing, seeking to reinstate the subordination of women—limiting rights, questioning our autonomy, and reducing our place to silence or service—we affirm clearly: faith in Jesus Christ does not demand subordination, but rather proclaims equality.

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

We believe in a God who does not legitimize inequality, who does not sanctify violence, and who does not ask us for silence or blind obedience.

We believe in Jesus, who spoke with women, who recognized them as disciples, who received his word, and who made them witnesses of the resurrection.

We believe in the Ruah, the Spirit of life, which continues to whisper freedom amidst rigid structures that exclude us in the Church and in society.

As women of faith:

- **We denounce all forms of violence against women, both within and outside the Church;**
- **We reject clericalism and all patriarchal structures that silence and exclude;**
- **We oppose political and religious attempts to roll back hard-won rights;**
- **We affirm the spiritual, theological, and ecclesial authority of women;**
- **We accompany survivors of abuse and sexual violence with listening, respect, and commitment.**

Our struggle is not born against faith, but from faith.

We do not walk outside the Gospel: we walk toward its center.

Because the Gospel is not a call to submission, but to dignity.

It is not an invitation to uncritical obedience, but to the freedom of the daughters and sons of God. Therefore, we invite you to actively participate in the March 8th marches and gatherings in your cities and regions, making visible our identity as women of faith and feminists.

We also encourage you to review the shared reflection material, to allow yourselves to be challenged by its calls to fast from fear, silence, and subordination, and to create banners and signs that clearly express our conviction: in Christ there is no gender hierarchy.

May our presence in the streets be a sign of Gospel consistency, active hope, and community commitment.

Because the Church we dream of does not exclude, does not cover up, and does not remain silent.

The Church we dream of listens, cares, and transforms.

The Church we dream of is synodal, just, and radically egalitarian.

We continue walking together.

**Mujeres e Iglesia Chile**  
**March 2026**



## Indian Women Theologians on activating the prophetic voices of women!

The Indian Women Theologians' Forum (IWTF) had its annual Meeting from 6th to 8th May 2025 on the theme The Prophetic Voices of Women. In the light of IWTF's mission to theologize from the context of our life experiences, the meeting began with sharing the unsettling questions that remain within each of us. We reflected on the 'unsettling questions' from the perspective of "The Politicization of Religion" and "Internalized Patriarchy, both Personal and Collective", and examined these concerns in the light of Jesus's life for evolving our theological responses.



We are challenged to make our theological articulations from a feminist consciousness and to grow in our commitment to the realization of the kin-ship vision mediated by Jesus through his teaching and his life. Only when we exercise our spiritual agency as individuals and as a collective can we witness to Jesus' resurrected presence in our world today. Through our theologizing we felt affirmed in our call to be prophetic voices, to challenge exploitation, reverse subjugating hierarchies in imitation of Jesus' servant leadership and build relationships founded on justice, inclusion and compassion.

**Virginia Saldanha**  
IWTF, Mumbai

# Gedanken der OrdensFrauen - Deutschland



For Catholic Christians, the highlight of the Easter celebrations is the Easter Vigil. The renewal of baptism plays an important role in this service. We are asked three times: "Do you renounce...?" The answer is: "I renounce!" Inspired by the rite of baptismal renewal, we - a group of Catholic nuns who came together in 2018 under the name "OrdensFrauen für Menschenwürde" (Nuns for Human Dignity) - renounce certain developments in our society and Church. "Renouncing and Believing - Reflections in Difficult Times, Thoughts on Easter 2026"

<https://www.ofmw.de/media/pages/texte/widersagen-und-glauben/2a1f0f960d-1774986060/widersagen-und-glauben.pdf>

# Women sharing their thoughts

Catholic Women's Council • 5m  
Patriarchy listening sessions

- Es gibt im Katholizismus viele theologische Realitäten und diese vielen Stimmen müssen hörbar sein. Das ist urkatholisch.
- The concept of Jesus being the problem for the Church, not women!
- Nella Chiesa c'è un problema di violazione dei diritti umani, di non rispetto della giustizia di genere. Combattere questa l'ignoranza est importante.
- Impunidad como forma de mantener la violencia: minimizando relatos o impidiendo procesos de denuncia
- L'église utilise-t-elle la religion pour justifier les traitements injustes ou la violence envers les femmes.
- Resistiendo juntas en red acompañándonos y sosteniéndonos, acuerpándonos en la calle.
- In vielen Ländern sind Frauen die einsetzen vermehrt sexuellen Avancen und sexualisierter Gewalt ausgesetzt.
- Mauer durchbrechen durch Widerstand
- Resisting through direct conversations with priests and bishops, including reminding them that in pre-colonial times there were women priests.
- Leer Teología feminista y autoras que hablan de Dios de otra manera
- Culture and Religion support each other in doing violence to women. Religion reinforces the violence in culture.
- Widerstand leisten und Widerstand benennen und dazu zustehen ist wichtig.
- Auch im pastoralen Raum sind es oft männliche dominierte Strukturen die gemeinsam mit Priester und Bischof bestimmen wie über die Rechte von Frauen gesprochen wird.
- Actions anti-patriarcat : Changer la langage ; Garder la structure générale liturgique d'une messe dominicale ; Retourner davantage aux enseignements de Jésus
- Frauen werden durch ignorieren müde gemacht.
- We are proud of our women's voices.
- Ne pas oublier que l'Eglise c'est NOUS, ce n'est pas que Rome ou l'institution ou le Vatican.

+ Post

# One spirit, many voices

*The spirit of Pentecost is about speaking and understanding across many languages and borders. At the Catholic Women's Council, our digital community is growing interactively, across multiple platforms. We are building a global home for our shared mission. On our YouTube channel and social media pages, you can find:*

- Listening Sessions: Video recordings of our gatherings.
- Global Voices: Feedback from our audience (Padlet) and inspiring quotes from our speakers.
- Multilingual Updates: Content currently available in five languages, with more to come!

## And now, we want to hear from you!

Are you a reader, a follower, or someone who simply cares about a Church that is equal, just, and welcoming to all? Then **you belong in this conversation**. A truly inclusive Church needs your unique perspective. Share your thoughts, ideas, photos, artwork, personal stories related to equal rights and equal dignity for women in the Catholic Church. Every voice you add becomes part of a worldwide movement — one that reflects the heart of Christ, open and inclusive of all people.

**"Your voice is the seed of a more just and equal Church."**

## Follow us!

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