



# Women in the Church

## Re-Exploring History

Dr Josephine Laffin

24 July 2019



# Jesus Healed Women

Catacomb of St Marcellinus and  
St Peter (probably early 4th century)

Source: [Public Domain] via Wikimedia Commons  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AHealing\\_of\\_a\\_bleeding\\_women\\_Marcellinus-Peter-Catacomb.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AHealing_of_a_bleeding_women_Marcellinus-Peter-Catacomb.jpg)



## Women were among the most faithful followers of Jesus

The Agony in the Garden by Beato Angelico and followers, mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, in cell n.34 of the Monastery of San Marco in Florence

Source: Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.  
[quest.eb.com/search/153\\_2946252/1/153\\_2946252/cite](https://www.britannica.com/search/153_2946252/1/153_2946252/cite).



**There were women at the foot of the cross, and at the empty tomb . . .**

The Crucifixion and the Women at the Tomb  
Rabbula Gospels, Syria, 586

Source:Wikimedia Commons  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Evangelio\\_sir%C3%ADaco\\_de\\_Rabbula.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Evangelio_sir%C3%ADaco_de_Rabbula.jpg)



Christ's Ascension, Rabbula Gospels, Syria, 586

Source: *Britannica ImageQuest*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.  
[quest.eb.com/search/126\\_154242/1/126\\_154242/cite](http://quest.eb.com/search/126_154242/1/126_154242/cite).



Pentecost, Rabula Gospels, Syria, 586

Source: Wikimedia Commons  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RabulaGospelsFolio14vPentecost.jpg>



MARKO



St Mark writing his Gospel  
Rossano Gospels, 6<sup>th</sup> century

Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.  
[quest.eb.com/search/153\\_2390653/1/153\\_2390653/cite..](http://quest.eb.com/search/153_2390653/1/153_2390653/cite..)



Mosaic in the Basilica of Parenzo, Croatia  
(6<sup>th</sup> century)

## An early Christian Manual: The Didache (1<sup>st</sup> century?)



A fragment of the Didache found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt  
(P.Oxy.XV 1782)

“You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers. You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honour among you.”

## An early Christian bishop: Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107)

“You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow too the presbytery as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God’s law.” (Letter to the Smyrneans 8)

“We should regard the bishop as the Lord himself.” (Letter to the Ephesians, 6)

10<sup>th</sup> century ceramic tile depicting Ignatius, now in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, USA

Source: [Public Domain] via Wikimedia Commons

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AByzantine\\_-\\_](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AByzantine_-_Saint_Ignatius_of_Antioch_-_Walters_4820867.jpg)

[Saint\\_Ignatius\\_of\\_Antioch\\_-\\_Walters\\_4820867.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AByzantine_-_Saint_Ignatius_of_Antioch_-_Walters_4820867.jpg)



“Now if anyone preaches Judaism to you, pay no attention to him.”

(Letter to the Philadelphians, 6)

Be deaf, then, to any talk that ignores Jesus Christ, of David’s lineage, of Mary; who was really born, ate and drank; was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate; was really crucified and died . . . He was really raised from the dead, for his Father raised him, just as his Father will raise us, who believe in him, through Jesus Christ, apart from whom we have no genuine life.

(Letter to the Trallians, 9)



Ignatius to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna

“Widows must not be neglected. After the Lord, you must be their protector. Do not let anything be done without your consent; and do not do anything without God’s, as indeed you do not do. Stand firm. Hold services more often. Seek out everybody by name.”



## Women in Leadership Roles?

Fresco with the veiled lady  
Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome, late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century

Source: [https://www.wga.hu/html\\_m/zearly/1/2mural/3priscil/2velati5.html](https://www.wga.hu/html_m/zearly/1/2mural/3priscil/2velati5.html)

## Women could be widows

11.3 When a widow is appointed, she shall not be ordained but she shall be appointed by the name. If her husband has been long dead, she may be appointed [without delay]. But if her husband has died recently, she shall not be trusted; even if she is aged she must be tested by time, for often the passions grow old in those who yield to them.

The widow shall be appointed by the word alone, and [so] she shall be associated with the other widows; hands shall not be laid upon her because she does not offer the oblation nor has she a sacred ministry. Ordination is for the clergy on account of their ministry, but the widow is appointed for prayer, and prayer is the duty of all.

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (?), third century (?)

## Women could be deacons

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.”

Paul’s letter to the Romans, 16:1 (NRSV)

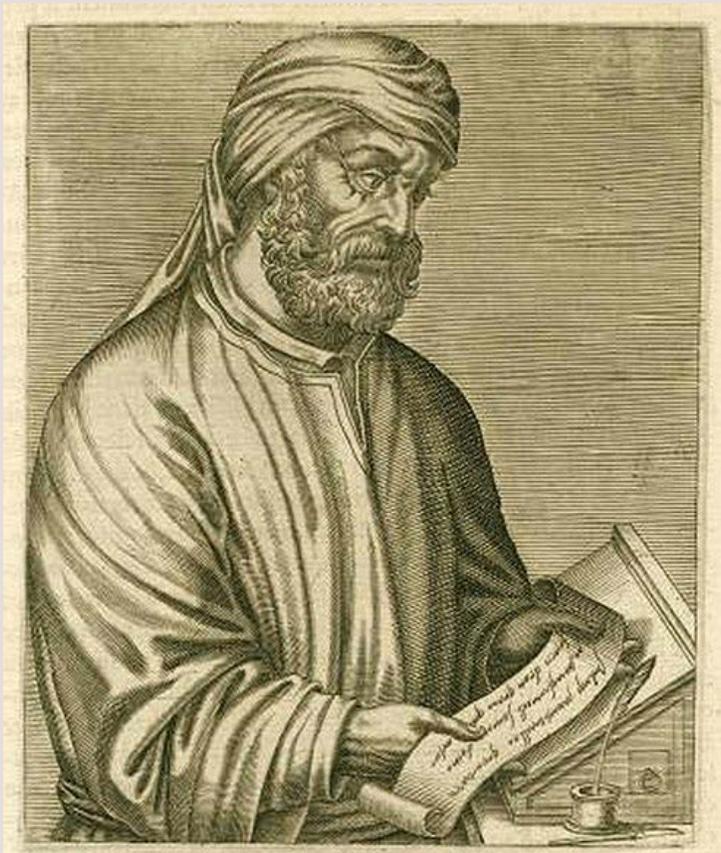
“Let [the bishop] be honored by you as God, for the bishop sits for you in the place of God almighty. But the deacon stands in the place of Christ; and you must love him. The deaconess shall be honored by you in the place of the Holy Spirit; and the presbyters shall be to you in the likeness of the Apostles; and the orphans and widows shall be reckoned by you in the likeness of the altar.”

"Appoint a woman for the ministry of women. For there are homes to which you cannot send a male deacon to their women, on account of the heathen, but you may send a deaconess ... Also in many other matters the office of a woman deacon is required..”

Didascalia Apostolorum (Syria? 3<sup>rd</sup> Century?)

# Women could be prophets

Eg. Prisca and Maximilla, followers or co-founders with Montanus of the Montanist or “New Prophecy” movement in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century. A heretical or charismatic sect?



Evidence of Tertullian (d. c. 225)

# Women could be missionaries



Roman ivory panel depicting Paul and Thecla, c. 430, now in British Museum.



St Thecla in the arena, 5th century. Christine Kondoleon, *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*.



Sixth century fresco of Paul and Thecla in the Grotto of St Paul at Ephesus



Psalter and New Testament Manuscript: St. Paul with St. Thecla and St. Timothy  
Constantinople, ca 1084



Saint Thecla (Mar Takla) monastery, Ma'loula, Syria  
Bernard Gagnon [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)]

# Women could definitely be martyrs



Apse mosaic in the seventh-century Basilica of St Agnes Outside the Walls, Rome

Photo: Jo Laffin



Stefano Maderno's sculpture of St Cecilia (1600) said to have been made after Maderno saw the incorrupt body of Cecilia when her tomb was opened in 1559. The sculpture is in the Basilica of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome. Cecilia is thought to have been a young Roman noblewoman martyred in the third century.

Photo: Jo Laffin, free to use with accreditation.

# Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity in Carthage, c. 203

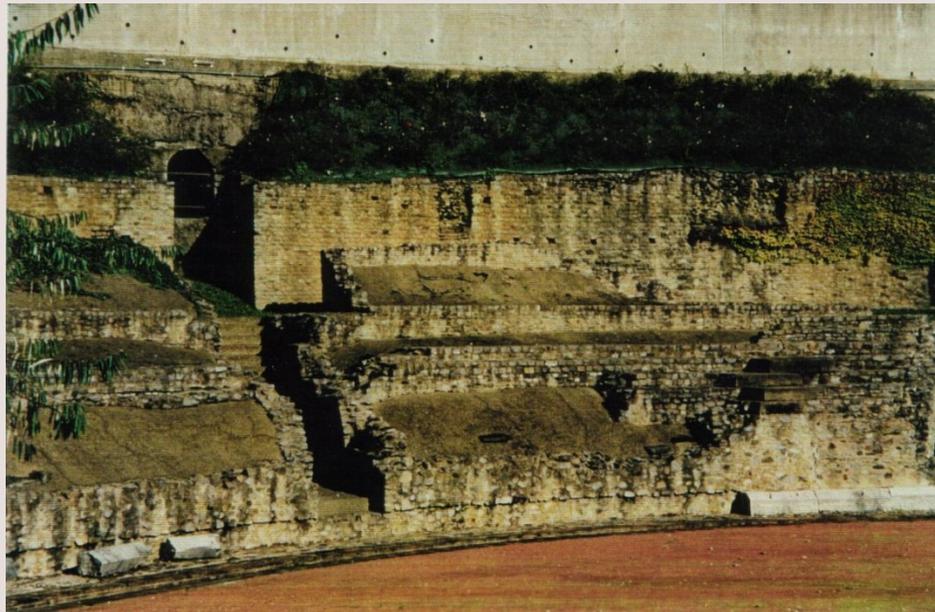


“We were condemned to the beasts, and we returned to prison in high spirits. But my baby had got used to being nursed at the breast and to staying with me in prison. So I sent the deacon Pomponius straight away to my father to ask for the baby. But father refused to give him over. But as God willed, the baby had no further desire for the breast, nor did I suffer any inflammation; and so I was relieved of any anxiety for my child and of any discomfort in my breasts . . .”

*The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*



The Roman amphitheatre in Lyons



Photos: Jo Laffin, free to use with attribution



Blandina was filled with such power, that those who tortured her one after the other in every way from morning till evening were wearied and tired, confessing that they had been baffled, for they had no other torture they could apply to her; and they were astonished that she remained in life, when her whole body was torn and opened up, and they gave their testimony that one only of the modes of torture employed was sufficient to have deprived her of life, not to speak of so many excruciating inflictions. But the blessed woman, like a noble athlete, recovered her strength in the midst of the confession; and her declaration, 'I am a Christian, and there is no evil done amongst us, 'brought her refreshment, and rest, and insensibility to all the sufferings inflicted on her.

Martyrdom of Saint Blandina, stained glass window by Alexandre Mauvernay

Source: Daniel Villafruela. [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)]



The Letter of the Churches of Vienna and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia quoted by Eusebius. *History of the Church*, Book 5, chapter 1

Blandina was hung up fastened to a stake, and exposed, as food to the wild beasts that were let loose against her; and through her presenting the spectacle of one suspended on something like a cross, and through her earnest prayers, she inspired the combatants with great eagerness: *for in the combat they saw, by means of their sister, with their bodily eyes, Him who was crucified for them*, that He might persuade those who trust in Him that every one that has suffered for the glory of Christ has eternal communion with the living God. When none of the wild beasts at that time touched her, she was taken down from the stake and conveyed back to prison. She was thus reserved for another contest, in order that, gaining the victory in many preparative conflicts, she might make the condemnation of the Crooked Serpent unquestionable, and that she might encourage the brethren. *For though she was an insignificant, weak, and despised woman, yet she was clothed with the great and invincible athlete Christ.* On many occasions she had overpowered the adversary, and in the course of the contest had woven for herself the crown of incorruption . . .

# Women could embrace ascetic life and be “Desert Mothers”

For example, Amma Syncletica (late  
3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century

“There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town; they are wasting their time. It is possible to be a solitary in one's mind while living in a crowd; and it is possible for those who are solitaries to live in the crowd of their own thoughts.”



Anna Syncletica depicted in the Menologion of Basil II, c. 1000

## Melania the Elder (d. 411).

Founded monasteries for men and women in Jerusalem and lived in the latter.

“No one in either the east or the west, the north or the south, failed to benefit from her good works. For twenty-seven years she offered hospitality; at her own expense, she assisted churches, monasteries, guests and prisons. Her family, her son and her own trustees supplied her with money” (Palladius, *Lausiac History*)

Participated in theological disputes, helping convince some who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit that they were wrong.

“What a woman she is, if it is permissible to call such a manly Christian a woman!” (Paulinus of Nola, Epistle 29 to Sulpicius Severus, c. 400)



Source:  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3A  
Melania\\_the\\_Roman.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMelania_the_Roman.jpg)



Saint Jerome with Saint Paula and Saint Eustochium by Francisco de Zurbarán (c. 1640/1650) now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Photo: Jo Laffin, free to use with attribution

“Fasting is not merely a perfect virtue: it is the foundation of all the other virtues; it is sanctification, purity, and prudence, – virtues without which no one can see God.”

“Virginity is natural to man while marriage is a result of the fall . . . I praise marriage, because it brings forth virgins. Thus do I gather the rose from the thorns, the gold from the earth, the pearl from the shell.”

"A clean body and a clean dress mean an unclean soul."

Some advice to women from St Jerome, late 4<sup>th</sup> century

## Women could be wives of bishops!

“Without saying anything to his wife, he [Sidonius of Clermont, d. 489] would remove silver vessels from his home and give them away to the poor. When she[his wife] found out what he had done, she used to grumble at him; then he would buy the silver vessels back from the poor and bring them home again.”

Gregory of Tours (d. 594), *History of the Franks*



Sidonius Apollinaris depicted in a stained glass window in the cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand

Source: By NN (Ökumenisches Heiligenlexikon [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Badegisil, bishop of Le Mans (d. 586) was “a very savage shepherd of his flock, unlawfully seizing and carrying off the goods of many people. His wife, who was even more fierce than he was, had the same morose and harsh temper as her husband. By constant nagging at him she egged him on to commit the most detestable crimes. No day passed and, indeed, no part of a day, in which he did not occupy himself in plundering his citizens or in quarrelling with them about something or another . . .

. . .Her malice and cruelty were quite beyond words. On more than one occasion she cut off a man’s penis with part of the skin of his stomach, and she burned the more secret parts of women’s bodies with metal plates which she had made white-hot. She was responsible for many other iniquities, but about these I have preferred to remain silent.”

Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*

# Women could be Writers

Eg. Hrotsvit of  
Gandersheim  
(c. 900s)





## Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Achievements included:

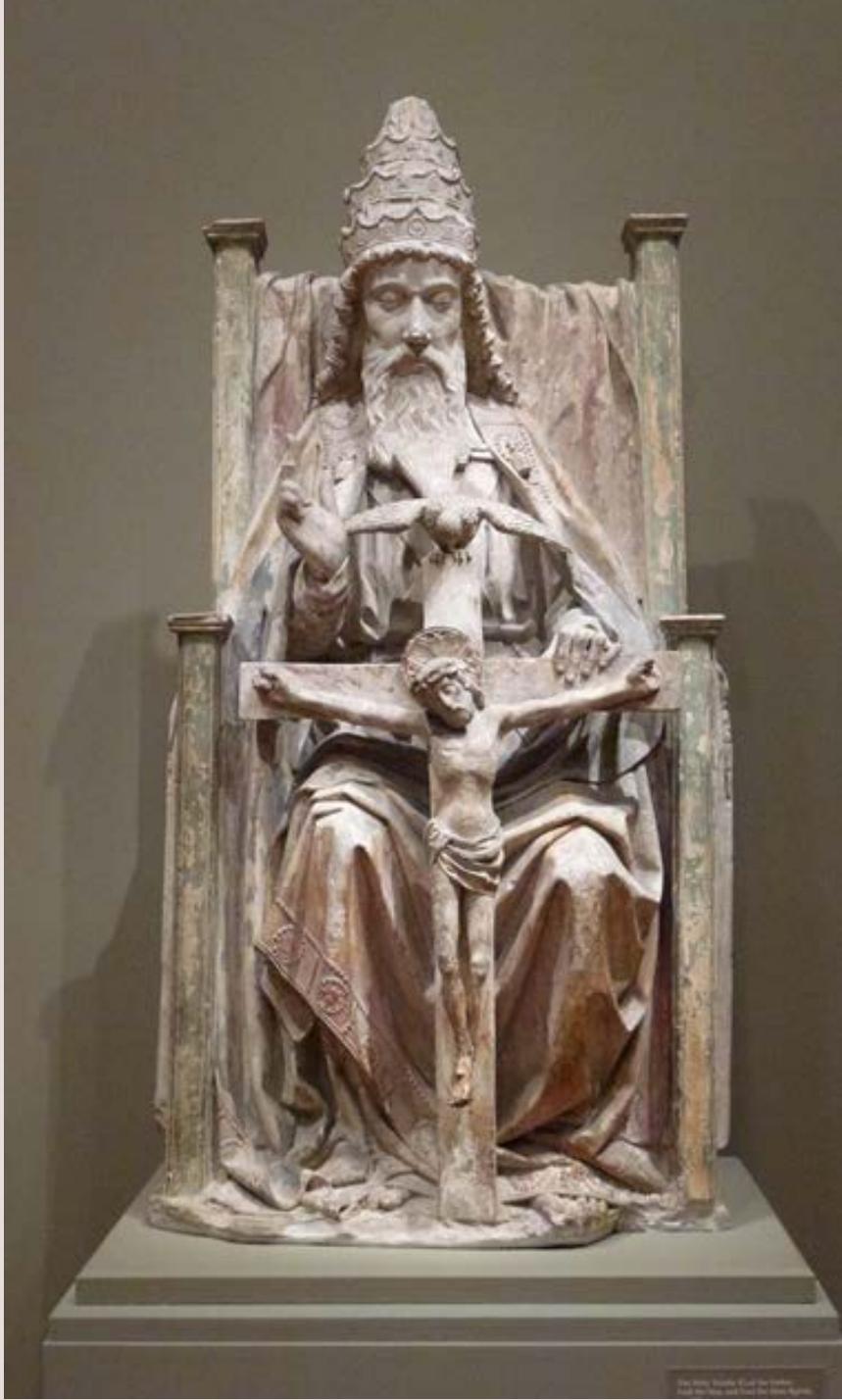
- Writing a medical encyclopedia, Lives of saints, Commentary on John's Gospel, Visionary works
- Composing liturgical songs
- Vast correspondence
- Preaching tours

Pope John Paul II referred to her as an “outstanding saint” in celebrations to mark the 800th anniversary of her death in 1998 and Pope Benedict proclaimed her a doctor of the church in 2012.

*I saw a bright light, and in this light the figure of a man the colour of sapphire, which was all blazing with a gentle glowing fire. And that bright light bathed the whole of the glowing fire, and the glowing fire bathed the bright light: and the bright light and the glowing fire poured over the whole human figure, so that the three were one light in one power of potential.*

Scivias 2:2





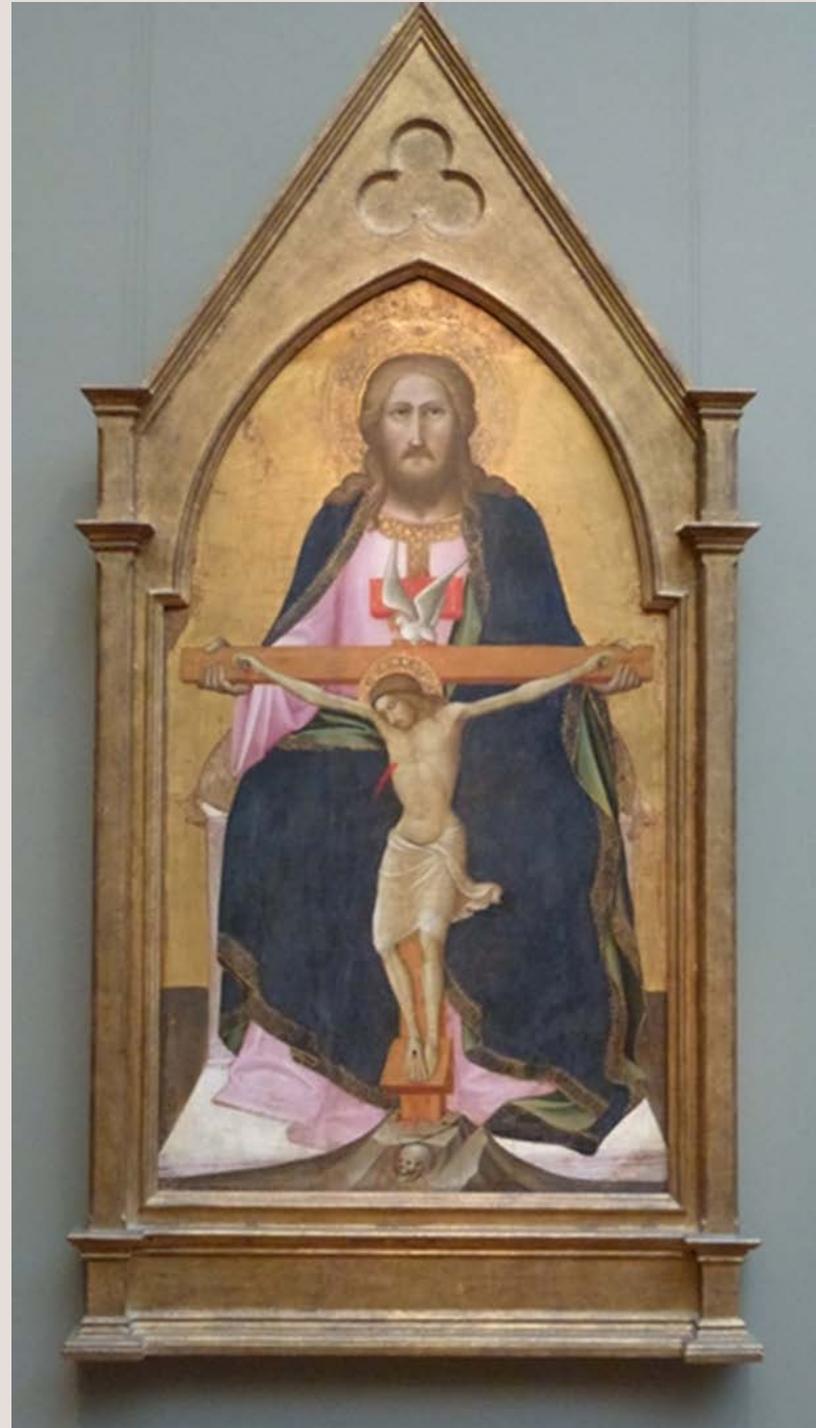
Holy Trinity c. 1475, now in the de Young Museum,  
San Francisco

Photo: Jo Laffin



Agnolo Gaddi, *The Trinity*, c. 1390,  
now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York

Photo: Jo Laffin





French School (13th century), now  
in Bibliotheque Mazarine, Paris



Flemish School (16th century) now in H. Shickman Gallery, New York



Roof Boss, Peterborough Abbey, late fifteenth century



Jean Fouquet, The Enthronement of the Virgin from the Book of Hours of Etienne Chevalier, c. 1452-60, Musée Condé, Chantilly

From Martina degli'Innocenti, *Mary*, p. 428.



Left: Enthroned Virgin and Child  
France, c. 1150-1200  
Cloisters Museum, New York  
Photograph: Jo Laffin



Right: 12<sup>th</sup>-century apse painting  
from Santa Maria in Taüll now in  
the Museu Nacional d'Art de  
Catalunya, in Barcelona  
Source {Public Domain} via Wikimedia Commons



14th century screen, Notre Dame, Paris

Photograph: Jo Laffin, 2009



Notre Dame, Paris, mid-14<sup>th</sup> century



St Thomas Church, Salisbury (15th century)



Jacopo Pontormo, *The Visitation*, 1528-30  
San Michele, Carmignano, Prato, Italy



Piero della Francesca (c. 1420-92), Madonna del Parto for cemetery chapel at Monterchi, Tuscany



12<sup>th</sup> century façade of Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome  
Photograph: Jo Laffin 2013





“Madonna del Latte” from Santa Maria della Spina in Pisa, c. 1345

Photo: Jo Laffin



Virgin of Mercy from the Church of Our Lady in Ravensburg, c. 1480

Bode Museum, Berlin



Johannes Rueland's Madonna of the Protective Mantle (1474) from the Church of St. Nicholas in Markdorf, Baden-Wurtemberg.

From Ebertshäuser, et. al., *Mary: Art. Culture and Religion through the Ages*, 6.



Michael Path, *Mary Guards the Church While Christ Stops the Father's ire*, Museo Diocesano, Bressanone, 1520.

From Martina Degl'innocenti Stella Marionoe, *Mary*, p. 433.



Holy Card image of Mary based a vision of Catherine  
Laboure  
(1806-1876) in 1830





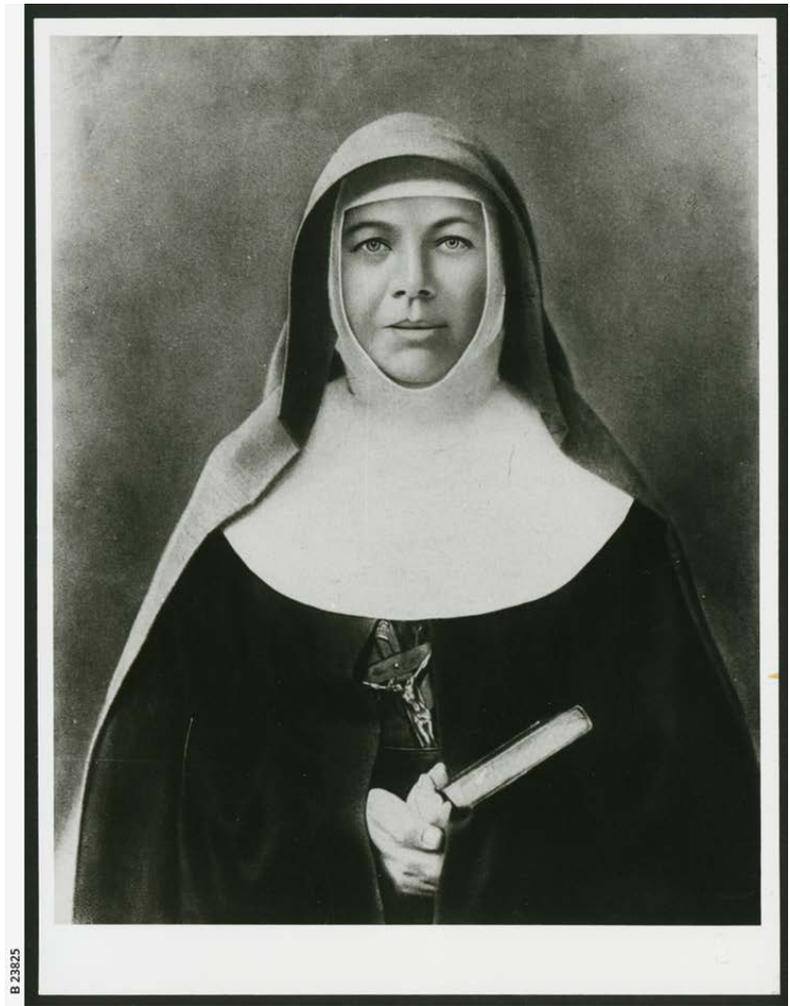
Beovich family in 1899



Matthew Beovich in 1919

“Indeed it is true that God deeply afflicts those He loves, and as He increases His grace to a soul He does not remove the cross, rather He increases it. All this you know so well, for I have heard it from you . . . .”

Matthew Beovich, letter to his mother Elizabeth, 1 April 1923



Statue by Judith Rolevink (2011) in Mount Street, North Sydney, outside Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel and photograph of Mary in the State Library of SA

“The hand of God is heavy upon us, but His holy Will must be done . . . Now, my own dear Annie, accept this heavy bitter trial as our dear departed mother would counsel were she alive.”

Mary to her sister Annie, 1 June 1886

My dearest brother,  
How can I write? You must have heard from Adelaide of our sad, terrible loss. Everything was too bewildering at first, then the effort to recover the dear remains, the funeral, and then came the reaction . . . It was sad, very sad, that she should go as she did, but we must hope that her reward is great in proportion.”

Mary to her brother Donald, 17 June 1886



Flora MacKillop (1816 – 1886)



Laurence Bonaventure Sheil OFM (1815-1872)



I do not know how to describe the feeling, but that I was intensely happy, and felt nearer to God than I had ever felt before. I can only dimly remember the things that were said to me, but the sensation of the calm beautiful presence of God I shall never forget. I have been told that some of the priests have since expressed surprise at my silence, but Father, I solemnly declare that the power, even the desire of speaking was not given to me. I loved the Bishop and priests, the Church and my good God then more than ever. I did not feel alone, but I cannot describe the calm, beautiful something that was near.

Mary MacKillop to Julian Tenison Woods after her excommunication, 15 November 1871.

'Resource Material from the Archives of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart; no. 4, 1980, p. 62.



Linda Klarfeld's statue of an elderly Mary (2008) outside ACU North Sydney Photos: Jo Laffin



# On 25 July 1968 Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical “Humanae Vitae”

**THE AUSTRALIAN**  
 NUMBER 1264 TUESDAY JULY 30 1968 PRICE FIVE CENTS

**'AT LAST WE HAVE A DECISION FROM THE VICAR OF CHRIST'**  
**POPE REJECTS THE PILL**

**Edict ends Catholic debate on abortion and all contraception**

Pope Paul has rejected all forms of artificial birth control, including the contraceptive pill. A papal encyclical released by the Vatican yesterday declares that any action intended to render procreation impossible is to be absolutely excluded.

It also renews the Roman Catholic ban on abortion, including abortion for therapeutic purposes. The encyclical will dash the hopes of millions of Roman Catholics throughout the world.

They had expected that the Pope's decision, following a five-year papal commission on birth control, would make some concessions to the reformists in the church.

But Pope Paul has used the strongest language possible to reject any change in the church's traditional position.

Not only is birth control outlawed; the subject has been closed to debate within the church, and church authorities say the terms of the encyclical will make it very difficult for it ever to be reopened.

The only loophole is that the Pope has approved the use of harmless drugs and surgery for the treatment of disease even if these lead to infertility.

"It is a decision of divine law and not merely of church law."



**A.L.P. char unaffected by bounda**  
 By ALAN RANNEY

An official Labor Party assessment of the A.L.P.'s electoral prospects of next year has not been damaged by the proposal.

The assessment is a Federal document issued among all Federal MPs. It shows that new boundaries, which would result in a swing of 6 per cent to Labor, would put the A.L.P. in power with a majority of 13.

Federal Labor Party members will welcome the decision because the party's victory in all the constituencies proposed by the new boundaries.

It shows what would happen if within the 1968 election the A.L.P. were to win a majority of 13.

Based on 1966 figures, which Labor polled 51 per cent of the vote.

NO AG. HOE ATT.

**Pope Gives Firm "No" To The Pill**

**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS**

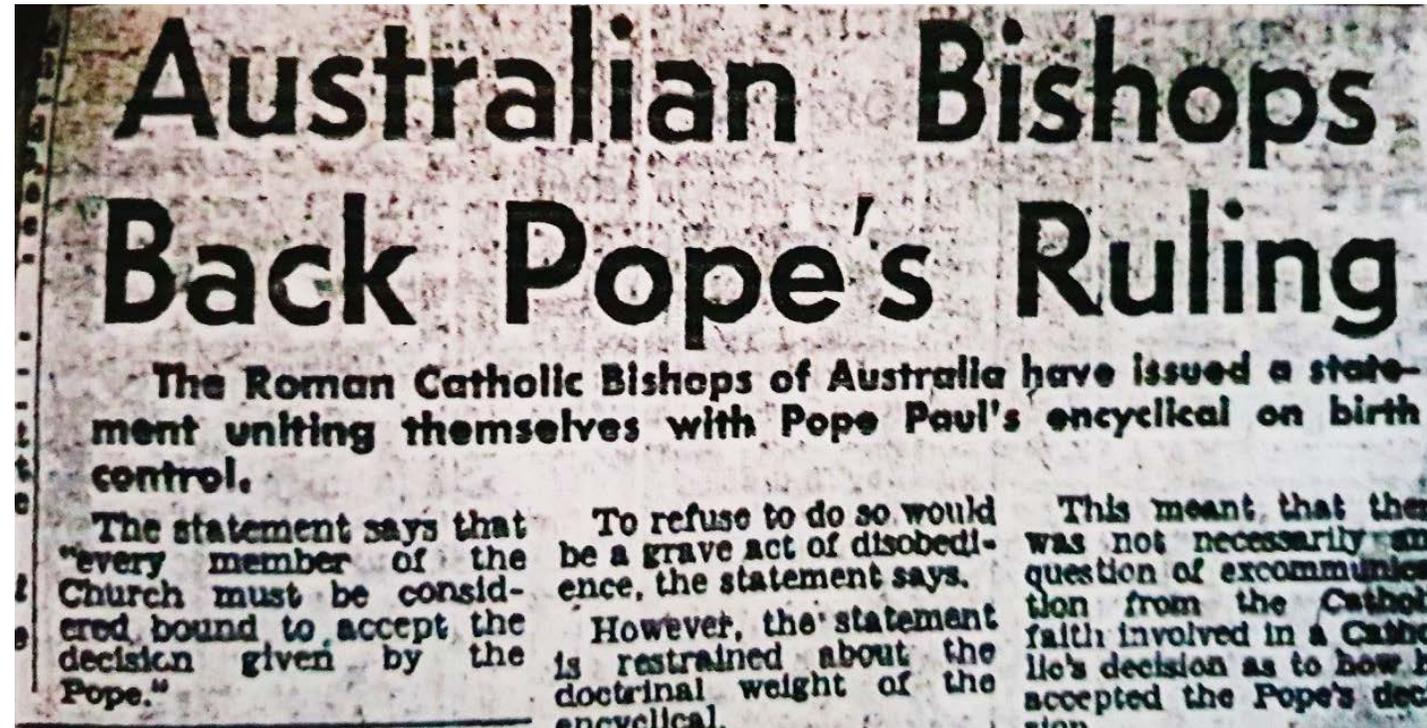
**VATICAN CITY, July 29** — Pope Paul, in a long-awaited ruling, has set his face against liberal pressures in the Roman Catholic Church and condemned the pill and all other artificial means of birth control.

## Some reactions from bishops in Australia:

James Knox of Melbourne said he received the encyclical “with a lively sense of gratitude”.

Auxiliary bishop Thomas Muldoon stressed in Sydney that the pope intended to “bind gravely the consciences of all”: “This is a declaration of divine law, not merely Church law.”

Archbishop O’Donnell in Brisbane commented that “there could now be no ambiguity on the Church’s position on birth control. “The Pope’s encyclical was the Church’s official teaching and was binding in conscience.”



Matthew Beovich issued a statement in Adelaide:

Christ's Vicar has spoken: the previous teaching of the Church continues as we have always known it. Aided by God's grace, with faith and humility we will obey the Holy Father.

To be a Catholic is to accept a life of suffering as well as love. No one welcomes the unquestioned suffering that refusing contraception involves. But Catholics have simply a different standpoint from almost everyone on earth. For Catholics loyalty to their Church is not a fringe affair. It involves loyalty to God himself. This loyalty has occasioned even martyrdom in the past. It will be the occasion of equal heroism as a result of the present decision. For Catholics when the Pope speaks as the successor of Saint Peter, as Shepherd of the whole Church, he is the voice of Christ and we accept his teaching.



Matthew Beovich in 1965

## Some reactions from women in “letters to the editor”:

I did not get married in order to suffer but because I loved my husband and wanted to bear his children. For health and finance reasons my family is now limited, but my conscience is easy . . . Let us not turn away from the Church in which we believe. But let us show that we are grown up in this matter. We are not naughty children being chided by a loving father.

“One of Them”, *Southern Cross*, 9 August, p. 6.

It is part of our lives to take the pope’s authority for granted. But since the Vatican Council it has also become part of our lives to believe we have an obligation to form our own consciences. It is all very well to say that Pope Paul’s statement will play a big part in forming our consciences in this matter. But the truth is that we read, pondered, prayed and sought advice about this matter years ago . . . Now we are in a bewildering position. Our conscience says yes and our pope says no.

“Catholic Mother”, *Southern Cross*,  
9 August, p. 6.



## Do you accept the Church's Teaching on BIRTH CONTROL?

	Catholic Laity		Priests	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Under 40	<b>24%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>33%</b>
Over 40	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>11%</b>
Male	<b>39%</b>	<b>61%</b>		
Female	<b>42%</b>	<b>58%</b>		

Paul Hewitt, *Catholics Divided: A Sociological Investigation* (Brisbane: Archdiocesan Research Group, 1978)

**How did the role of women in the Catholic Church change after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65)?**





**“A good symbol of  
the pre-Vatican II  
church would be a  
mass rally or a  
religious  
procession.”**

Edmund Campion, “Vatican II:  
Fifty Years On”, *Journal of the  
Australian Catholic Historical  
Society* 33 (2012),111.

Praying the Rosary at St Francis Xavier Seminar; Marian Process in Adelaide 1957

# THE PARISH AROUND THE ALTAR



ADELAIDE DIOCESAN LIFE CAMPAIGN - 1964  
DISCUSSION KIT No. 1

# SEMINAR ON NATURE OF THE CHURCH



Sr. Bernadette, Mrs J.Coffey, Sr. Alice, Fr.D.Edwards, Br. G. Faulkner and Sr. Thomas were among those who attended the seminar on "The Church" at Whyalla.

**“The symbol of the Vatican II church might be a small group”**

# What Parish Councils Do



*Bathurst Observer, 8 June 1975*

There is no doubt that women have a real and a valuable contribution to make in the parishes. This has traditionally been regarded as work connected with the schools, providing morning and afternoon teas at official functions or assisting in the altar society.

In the parish council, the secretary or minute secretary is often a woman because, in the popular conception, women have more time to spare and more patience with infinite letter-writing and end-tying .

But it is becoming more obvious to all that women are capable of thinking. They are progressive innovators. They are good organisers. And they are sensitive observers of the difficulties of others. . . .

## WOMEN IN A PARISH

**'A real contribution to make'**

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By

**HEATHER HARTSHORNE**

Mrs. Hartshorne is a Diocesan Pastoral Council representative for the western region. This article is based on a talk she gave at the recent Diocesan Assembly.



AS I SEE IT

# ARE PARISH COUNCILS A FLOP?

*Catholic Weekly*, 25 February 1975

## Parish councils hit by apathy

how it is designed and what it actually achieves. He admits that he has found a small mixture of apathy on the part of

ated as widely as possible. In a recent letter to all parish priests Cardinal Freeman made

*Catholic Weekly*, 6 June 1974

“It is surely a truism to say that the most unfree women in the old church were religious sisters, nuns. Yet, as I’ve argued elsewhere, they were the true makers of the Australian Catholic church of the past . . . the most enthusiastic and dedicated makers of the Vatican II church.” (Edmund Campion)



Sister Monica Marks RSM (and Bernadette Marks RSM in first photo). Photographs courtesy of Bernadette Marks



**Adelaide Sisters of Mercy in the 1970s**

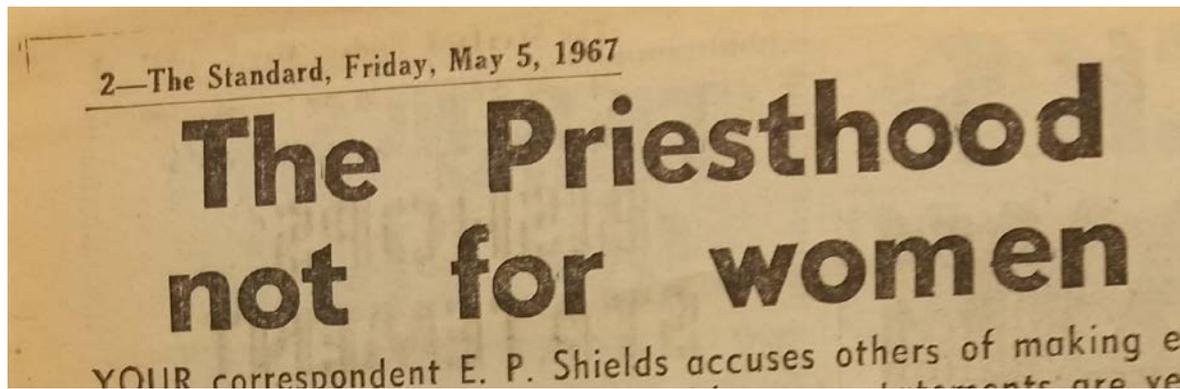


**Anne McLay, *Women on the Move . . . A History of the Adelaide Sisters of Mercy* (1996)**

“There was an enormous lot of human suffering involved in winning the relative freedom and flexibility we have as a congregation at the present time . . . It is a rather scary thing to face up to the fact that the institution you belong to, which seemed as solid as a rock, is really this fragile group of crazy women, that you need their help and they need yours, and that you are vulnerable to change, even to extinction.”

Monica Marks, Report to Provincial Chapter,  
Adelaide 1980



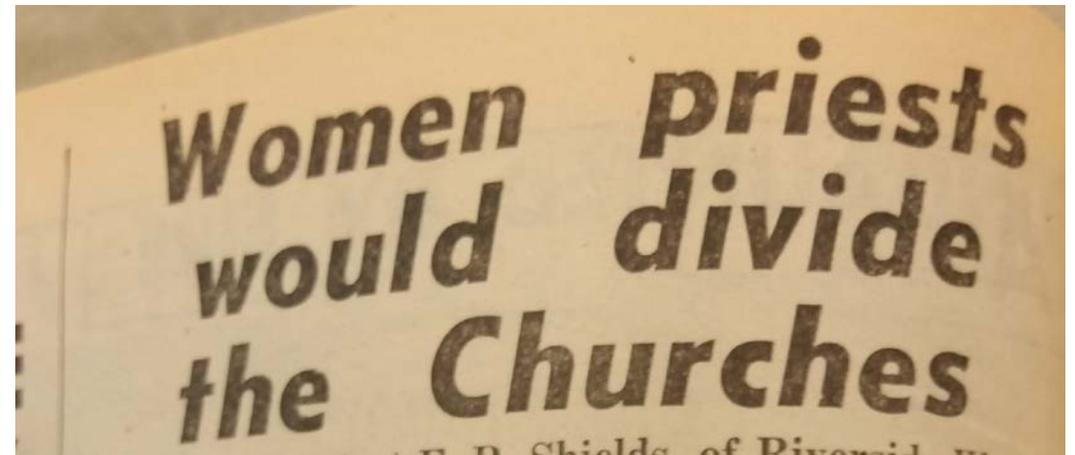


“An Interesting question is why Our Lady was not made a priest if the priesthood was open to women . . .Women are called to the vocation of motherhood.”

J.L.M. *Standard*, 14 April, 1967.

“Women are creatures of moods and emotions and as such are totally unsuited to the calm and rational approach needed in pastoral work and the sacraments, particularly Confession.”

‘M.R.’ *Standard*, 5 May 1967



“Women are no good at being fathers. Therefore they can never be Catholic priests . . . The priesthood is not a career in the Church open to both sexes. It is an adventure for God akin to fatherhood, and for masculine men only.

Rev. B.T. *Catholic Weekly*, 9 July 1978

# Woman Reads Epistle At St. Mary's

A WOMAN read the Epistle at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, to a congregation of hundreds of other women and girls.

The president of the Combined Catholic Colleges' Ex-students' Association, Mrs. Joan Vesper, was chosen for this honor at the group's annual Mass, offered by Cardinal Gilroy, who also addressed the ex-students.

He spoke on the gospel message of charity and forgiveness, urging the women to encourage family prayer in their homes.

Prayer, he said, brought peace of mind, joy of heart, and was a foretaste of the happiness of eternal life.

During the Mass two of the ex-students presented the offertory gifts.

After Mass, the ex-students, and some of the



*Catholic Weekly, 12 March 1970*

# WOMEN LECTORS, ALTAR GIRLS?

The National Liturgical Commission plans to look into the possibility of extending the ministries of acolyte and lector to women.

*Southern Cross, 5 March 1976*

# Yes, women can read when the men aren't there

THEY'RE calling for readers again at our Church. Come on, you men, let's have some volunteers. Let's have names on the list at

Better he'd left us out altogether. We're used to that.

Funny how one little afterthought tacked onto the end of quite a nice sentence can change the lifestyle of a

By  
**JOAN FLANAGAN**

their punctuality, and for their efficiency.

We'll be told it's all right for one of us to climb up into the pulpit even on mornings when somebody has just sighted a six-year-old boy toiling up the hill towards the church on his

*Catholic Weekly, 2 January 1975*

## TWO ANNOUNCEMENTS:



1. The host is placed on the open palm.



2. The host rests on the open palm.



3. The communicant takes the host with the fingers of her lower hand.



4. The communicant places the host in her mouth.

### • COMMUNION IN THE HAND • SPECIAL MINISTERS

Archbishop Gleeson this week made two important announcements about receiving and distributing Communion.

**THE FIRST** is that the ancient practice of receiving Communion in the hand will be introduced in the diocese on Sunday, December 21.

He stressed Communion in the hand will be an alternative method of receiving the Eucharist.

People will be free to choose whether they will receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue.

**THE SECOND** is that he will now formally accept nominations from parishes for special ministers of the Eucharist.

This means that, where there is real need, specially trained lay people, as well as religious sisters and brothers, will be able to help the priest distribute Communion.

Archbishop Gleeson gives details of both announcements in a statement which will be read in all churches in the diocese this Sunday.

It appears in full on this week's centre spread.

He has also issued a booklet, "The Eucharist," giving the historical and theological background to the changes and containing detailed guidelines on how they are to be implemented.

#### FREE TO CHOOSE

In an accompanying letter to priests he said: "I would stress that as from that date (December 21) our people have the right to choose whether they will receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue.

"They must be free to make the choice as individuals every time they receive Communion anywhere in the archdiocese.

"Communion in the hand should not be forced in any way.

#### GENUINE NEED

"Nor do the priests have the right to deny the

ary ministers is confirmation.

The bishop is the ordinary minister but a priest can give confirmation in some cases.

The guidelines say permission for the use of special ministers for the Eucharist will be given:

- To make easier access to holy Communion possible.

- Where a disproportionate amount of time is taken to distribute Communion and the liturgy of the Mass is interrupted.

- To meet the needs of the sick.

- To help old or sick priests distribute Communion.

#### CONSULTATION FIRST

In the letter to priests, Archbishop Gleeson said permission for special ministers for the Eucharist will be given in a parish only after consultation between the priests in the parish and the parish pastoral council.

The parish priest will nominate the special ministers, once again after consultation with the parish pastoral council.

Special ministers will be commissioned to function for 12 months. Their faculties can be renewed for further periods.

They can act as special ministers only in the parish for which they are authorised.

Commissioned people must attend a training session before they can act as special ministers.

Because help may be needed to distribute Communion over the Christmas period, Archbishop Gleeson will allow selected lay people to act as temporary special ministers in special cases and where the parishes have undertaken to carry out the conditions laid down in the guidelines.

"On a recent trip overseas I was informed that in my parish a woman helping the priest distribute communion wore slacks . . . . As pressure for the laity to distribute Communion builds up, this diocese would be wise to introduce some dress regulations to circumvent the distinct possibility of the Body of Christ being distributed by some miniskirted female."

'R.G.', Wavell Heights, *Catholic Leader*

## HOW COMMUNION WILL BE GIVEN

These pictures show how Communion will be given in the hand. Archbishop Gleeson explains the procedure this way: "Receiving Communion in the hand, the faithful approach the

"They are not to be embarrassed in any way. In the case where Communion is distributed under both kinds by means of intinction, the host dipped in the chalice is never placed in the hand of the communicant.

"Nor do the priests have the right to deny the

# ALTAR GIRLS NEXT?

The possibility of young women serving on the altar will be discussed at the national altar servers' seminar in Adelaide next week.

Fr. Roy Richardson, "The week will be all "In fact, in the early worship means in their who is organising the

*Southern Cross, 9  
May 1975*

Why is it that we do not see altar girls taking part in the Mass?

Did not Jesus come into this world out of the womb of a woman? If a woman was specially chosen and capable of carrying out that task, why can't we take part in Masses?

How many women do you see reading the liturgy? Surely women can do more than sit on mothers' clubs and raise money.

Jesus did say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me' and not 'Suffer little boys to come unto me.' At no time did He show discrimination of male and female.

If male and female are capable of going to Mass together, why then, can't male and female be capable of serving at the altar together?

*J.A.L., Catholic Weekly, 13 February 1975*



George Mung Mung (c. 1920-1991),  
Mary of Warmun (The Pregnant Mary),  
Warmun Community, Turkey Creek,  
Western Australia, c. 1983