



Women as Witnesses to the Joy of the Gospel

*“But we need to create
still broader
opportunities for a more
incisive female presence
in the Church”*

(Evangelii Gaudium 103)

Gospel Joy ; A More Incisive Role for Women?



My Brief:

- Where do you see hope and possible obstacles?
- Some comment on issues directly related to women's participation in the family/church/society
- A call or calls to action for participants to take back to their parishes, dioceses and communities

A More Incisive Role for Women?

"But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 103)

What might Pope Francis actually be asking here?

Incisive: an adjective of

1. a person or mental process. 'Intelligently analytical and clear-thinking'
2. an action. 'Quick and direct'

Origin: Late Middle English (in the sense cutting, penetrating): from Latin *incidere* cut into

(Oxford English Dictionary Online)

- Are women already acting incisively?
- If not , why not?
- What of the creativity implied? And with who- who is the ' we'?

A More Incisive Role for Women?

Some clues from the text...

Located in section with the subtitle 'Other Ecclesial Challenges' [that the church faces in living the Joy of the Gospel]

102: Growing awareness of lay ministry, but lay participation in decision making endangered by " excessive clericalism"

103: Acknowledges the " indispensable role of women to church and society" Women are collaborators in family life, ministry and theological reflection [among other roles!] "But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church." Because the gifts which women possess are needed by the church and the world.

So ...

- It is both invitation and exhortation think again (intelligently, analytically, clearly) about the roles of women in the church and society
- the status quo is inadequate- this does not diminish what has been achieved, but says more is needed!

However the follow para. recognises this is no easy path; there will be no quick fixes!

The "legitimate" rights of women " present the Church with profound and challenging questions which cannot be lightly evaded" (104)

Sweet Darkness

David Whyte, *The House of Belonging* (1996)

When your eyes are tired
the world is tired also.

When your vision has gone
no part of the world can find you.

Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.

There you can be sure
you are not beyond love.

The dark will be your womb tonight.
The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.

You must learn one thing.
The world was made to be free in.

Give up all other worlds
except the one to which you belong.

Sometimes it takes darkness and the
sweet
confinement of your aloneness to
learn

anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive
is too small for you.



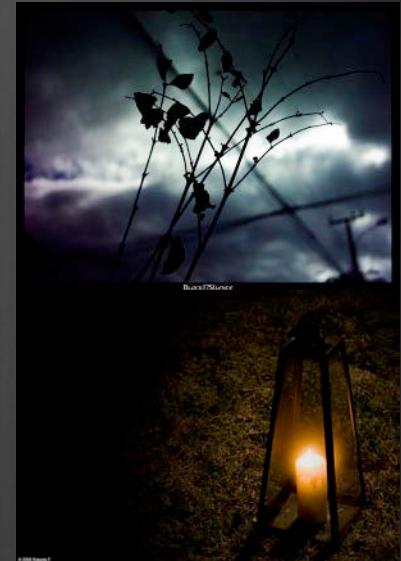
Sweet Darkness...

*"Let no one say the past is dead.
The past is all about us and within."*

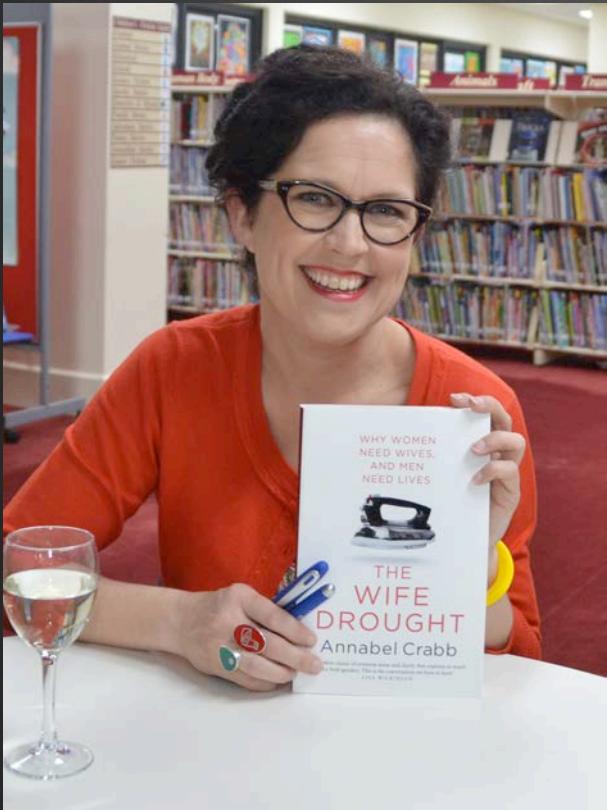
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In what way is Gospel joy also a 'sweet darkness'?

What 'whole truth' do you have to speak?



The 'F' Word...



"I am a feminist because it bothers me that a woman gets killed by her male partner every single week, and somehow that doesn't qualify as a tools-down national crisis even though if a man got killed by a shark every week we'd probably arrange to have the ocean drained."

"Feminism is messy and imperfect, and has people you love, as well as people you can't stand. It shares these features with humanity"

Annabel Crabb (SMH, 7th March 2015)



Reflecting on a recent conversation with Sr. Mary John Mananzan OSB



“ Dance with the playful consciousness of God”

“ We must announce the Good News... walk our talk... and denounce the bad news”

What Might We Learn from our EATWOT Sisters?

THE PROCESS MATTERS

"we actually named our theology the theology of struggle, instead of theology of liberation – because we were giving focus on the process rather than just the outcome"

SUPPORT MATTERS . AS DOES BEING ROOTED IN 'ORA ET LABOR'

"I get the inspiration to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed because I have this community,"

"A mystic is a prophet in contemplation. And a prophet is a mystic in action. And for me that is my explanation of our Ora et Labora."

" Dance with the playful consciousness of God"

A GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR US TOO?

"Anything that contributes to the full humanity of women is from God and is salvific. Anything that dehumanises women is not salvific and not from God".

Call for Action... aka "Get Ready Girls, It's On!"

- Get organised; find like minded others and 'push'!
 - " Not all solutions need to be doctrinal or the result of intervention of the magisterium..."
- Acknowledge and make friends with darkness:
 - What might we avoiding or denying ?
 - Which ' dangerous memories' we might be forgetting?
- Engage in solid social cultural and economic analysis of the current situation:
 - " See judge act"
 - Where are women incisively present already? What lessons might be learnt?
 - Where are they absent? Why?
 - Have these questions been asked before? What has changed since then?
 - What normative notions of 'women' and 'incisiveness' are active? What effect do they have?
- Keep the dialogue going :
 - We must find new ways of hearing and promoting the conversations that are taking place
 - Write, publish, talk, share: 'You get proud by practicing' (Stella Young)
 - Images of the Feminine; A profound question from today: "how can we see the feminine in the face of God when we are surrounded by male pronouns"?

Where do I see hope?

- The renewed energy and boldness of our conversation.
‘Do not underestimate the capacity of a small group of committed citizens to change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has’ Rosa Parks
- ‘Catholicity’ of the the conversation.
Not only has there been a reviving of the conversation, but this is a conversation that is being asked in many ecclesial and theological spaces at this time: INSeCT, ACTA/ACBA, Special Commission on Women and the Diaconate, The Extraordinary Synod on the Family, On going concerns re: Church Credibility post Sexula Abuse Scandals. Possible Synod for the Church in Australia?
- Laudato Si:
‘Integral ecology’ as a kind of reception of Eco-feminist thought within our social teaching? AND its emphasis on **conversion**. Good news for the earth and for more just relations with (and among) women?
- Synodality- A Listening Church which is both teaching and learning!
Consultation as “ a method which safeguards the role of the laity in the formulation of the Church teaching and the role of the bishops as teachers in the Church and society more broadly conceived. In other words in this educational process the Bishops are both teaching and learning”
(Australian Bishops in A Commonwealth for the Common Good)

Where do I see challenges?

- 'Catholicity' of the conversation!
 - Catholic Women in Australia are diverse, and have diverse spiritualities, ecclesiologies and ideas about what a more incisive role for women might mean!
 - We have not always been good at making space for each other, but this is vital if the dialogue is to integrity. Might we learn lessons from Receptive Ecumenism and the call to "deep listening"?
- Unacknowledged pain and violence
 - "The dark will be your womb tonight, the night will give you a horizon further than your eyes can see..." But this presumes a willingness to face shadows... Always a challenge !
 - What kind of conversions are each of us called to? How have we internalised a lack of mutuality?
- Anchoring 'metanoia' and change within the life of the Body of Christ-
 - Veronica Lawson: " A new paradigm of gender mutuality"? Possible? How ? What resources might this language release?
 - Planting and tending our gardens: How much of a priority are we willing to make of attending to our own development; professionally and personally? Why is this hard to do?
 - Being tended to within the Community of the Church- are our efforts in supporting and forming women in church adequate?

A More Incisive Role for Women ?



What insights have you collected today? We began by praying...

- Transform our lives
- Transform our church
- Transform our communities.

Get ready Girls, It's On!

- What one or two specific actions do you think might be yours to take up as a result of our conversations today?