



# The Seed Keepers

A Publication of the Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE)

Réseau Catholique pour l'égalité des femmes

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As we in Ottawa CNWE put the finishing touches on this our first issue of *The Seed Keepers* (TSK), we are hopeful that we can 'get the message across' in a manner that comes close to the high standards set by recent TSK teams. At the same time, we send congratulations and hearty thanks to all of you in New Brunswick who stood faithfully at the editorial helm for the last three years, providing us with a thought-provoking, profoundly interesting newsletter.

Early on in our planning we chose the theme 'Reaching Out,' purposely echoing the 2012 AGM endorsement of the new CNWE Reaching Out initiative, more of which you'll hear about in future issues. How is Reaching Out envisioned for *The Seed Keepers*? In short, the vision is to bridge gaps that exist in the Roman Church, making TSK a conversational causeway linking matters that are critical to our spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and bodily well-being.

Some years ago in an optimistic mood I sent an op ed piece to the editor of a major Canadian newspaper. (Alas, it was never published.) It detailed my dream of having a conversation with the pope about the second class status of women in the Roman Church. My arguments were tight, as cogent as I could make them. I opened letting the pope know that I couldn't believe my good fortune because, according to reliable sources, women are cut off at the pass if they want to talk to the pope about their status within the Roman Church. I continued by congratulating him for allowing himself the opportunity to speak with me, a woman who is known not to hold with every item in the Nicene Creed. We went toe to toe on a good few points but as I concluded in my op ed, my dream ended before any real resolution occurred. I added something about this dream containing no surprises but that I could keep on dreaming, hoping for something better. And, I am still doing that.

In this issue, we look at some recent positive happenings within the church (i.e., the People of God). Rita Patenaude, in jogging our collective memory about the significance of the name '*The Seed Keepers*,' has us claiming our role as holders of precious grains of truth. Máire Goss and Elizabeth McGahan report on fruitful meetings. There is some real good news from the Vatican, and Jennifer Waterman makes a personal statement about changes that are necessary within CNWE now that some progress has occurred. Jennifer's article begs response, and we look forward to reading and publishing many in future issues.

Come with your feature articles, op ed pieces, letters to the editor, book reviews, prayers and poetry! We'll welcome you in to this causeway of conversation that *The Seed Keepers* has been and wants to continue to be. Reach Out to us here at TSK!

Virginia Lafond  
Editor



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## *“from one seed keeper to another”*

When the day arrived last August for the sending up to Mars of the robot, “Curiosity”, I smiled. What a perfect name to express the purpose of the little robot! I found myself wishing I had been named “Curiosity”. I might have asked more questions when I was young. I **do** ask them now, however.

Some cultures take naming very seriously, and some women who have suffered abuse for years find healing and freedom in rituals of re-naming. The new name by which they call themselves declares, for all to hear, the strength and beauty they have found in themselves. Embracing the new name and living by it becomes their new calling – I am Survivor ... I am Truth Teller ... I am Beloved ... I am She Who Dares ... I am She Who Dances.

In the Fall of 2004 the CNWE newsletter took on a new format and a new name – *The Seed Keepers*. Maude Barlow, co-founder of the Council of Canadians and self-named “Unrepentant Canadian” told CNWE members the story of how she and Vandana Shiva, an eco-feminist and noted activist from India, had become friends. Vandana had struggled fiercely to prevent multinational corporations from taking out private patents on the genetic heritage of India, and had instituted seed banks so that farmers would not have to buy patented seed every year, but would be able to continue to save their own seed and use it to grow their crops. Vandana had presented Maude with a book of photos of the smiling farmers with the words “from one seed keeper to another”. CNWE members had decided that we also are “seed keepers”, holding on to grains of truth, justice and equality for women in the work that we do regarding women’s health, spirituality, safety and education.

If the little robot, “Curiosity”, pays attention to every bump, texture and temperature she encounters on Mars, she will be doing “the work that bears her name”. In the same way, CNWE members are encouraged to embrace the work of planting and harvesting the issues that are so important to women.

Rita Patenaude, a long time member of CNWE

*Longstanding CNWE member*

*Jennifer Waterman*

*calls for*

*Change within CNWE*



**I** have been a CCWO/CNWE member for over thirty years. My earliest memory is of being present to a discussion about its founding either just before or just after the founding meeting in Toronto. We were gathered in the sitting room of a convent in Nepean. I don't think I joined just then but certainly not so long afterwards. I was, in fact, just returning to the Church after an almost twenty year absence. The women I met at that meeting in Nepean provided me a place in the Church to which I could return.

I have been thinking about CNWE a lot in recent months. I have been reflecting upon how the successful ordination of women in the Womenpriest movement that we support seems to me to demand further change at CNWE. For almost all our years of existence our focus has been to see that the Roman Catholic Church recognize the baptismal equality of men and women and the consequent right of women to be ordained ministers along with men. While the official church still refuses us that right, we have claimed it for ourselves and moved on. CNWE has been very happy to have been present at women's ordinations in Europe and North America and to have had women priests celebrate Eucharist with us.

This has been a dynamic change for CNWE women.

Now, it seems to me that the move from taking on for years a socio-political and spiritual struggle to achieve ordination to a position where we now have women priests entails a shift in our relationship to our own organization. Surely we now have to be clearer about our own theology? What are the faith positions that our women priests espouse and that we support in encouraging them to celebrate with us? If the goal is still to have women priests accepted as such within the "official" church, do we expect these women - and the currently ordained women - to accept the dogmas and doctrines of that official church. I think we do

not. However, much of what CNWE members believe/have faith in remains inchoate, understood as "where we are coming from," but not fully articulated amongst us, though often conversationally shared; this is because it has not been our focus up to now.

While we accept the idea of "the priesthood of all believers" (why ordained priests at all, then?) and the baptismal equality of all believers, and we are generally liberal in our theological perspectives, what is it that we believe Jesus to be for us? Who is Mary for us? If she remains Mother of God, does that mean for us that Jesus is God in that classic traditional sense? What is the Eucharist that we celebrate with our ordained women priests? I do not think it is the formal Transubstantiation of Roman Catholic doctrine. What does Resurrection mean for us? My sense from years of membership in CNWE is that we are drawn to the thoughts of women like Elizabeth A. Johnson and Joan Chichester, men like Michael Morewood and John Selby Spong - and that we each have our own faith understandings which are welcomed amongst us.

Yet welcoming the ordained women priests amongst us surely suggests a shared communion. Can we articulate what we share as communion, apart from the belief that women should be ordained? - And somehow that not becoming itself doctrine and dogma?

I can imagine that being more overtly articulate about what our CNWE faith positions are may be seen as dangerous for an already suspect organization, but being negatively regarded by the hierarchy hasn't intimidated us before. I hope my ponderings meet some of yours. Let's talk together more on this.

Mary Ellen Chown speaks on

## The Catholic New Roman Missal

asking if it's *Lost in Translation*



One of the gifts that membership in CNWE offers is an opportunity to learn from a variety of member resources and like-minded networks. After a CNWE member presented some of the problems with the New Roman Missal at our 2011 conference, I had a desire to share this information in my hometown, Oakville, Ontario.

With the expertise of my fellow CNWE members, the extensive resources of [www.misguidedmissal.com](http://www.misguidedmissal.com), and my own experience of the new translation, I offered a public presentation at the local library in September, 2012. What struck me most was the depth of wisdom that our CNWE members brought to the discussion. I was also moved by the anger felt by parents. After years of family commitment to the Catholic Church, they feel betrayed by a hierarchy more concerned with adherence to Latin and pre-Vatican II theology than to the urgent needs of the 'people of God' in our times. It was a powerful reminder that the voice of CNWE is needed more than ever as it joins an ever-growing chorus for change in the church and in the world.

Last chance for you and friends to sign the New Roman Missal petition at [www.cnwe.org](http://www.cnwe.org). It will be delivered soon to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops!

*In memory of her...*

### MEMORIES OF MARGARET O'GARA

Margaret was my faculty advisor during graduate studies at St. Michael's Faculty of Theology from 1988 to 1991. I took three of her courses, and she advised the liturgy committee with which I was involved. More than anything, I remember Margaret's intensity and careful listening. I'm pretty intense myself and it was through her thoughtfully planned and intellectually rigorous courses, as well as numerous conversations, that I began to sort out my emotions and learn to think theologically. She advised me to channel my energy into well-crafted theological arguments. I am grateful for her patient understanding then and for her enthusiastic support when I recently returned to graduate school.

Cathy Holtmann

Margaret had a lovely way of blending deep faith, thorough reasoning and 'delight in life' in her teaching. I remember her beginning an introductory lecture with: "The question of God is a big question!" She then went on to present often complex concepts with detail and clarity. Margaret challenged me to write more coherently and learning with her was often exhilarating! When I finished school, Margaret was supportive of my work in theology and advocating for change in the church. She will continue to inspire me to wrestle with making clear sense in the light of the Gospel.

Mary Ellen Chown

*St. Michael's College has established the Margaret O'Gara Scholarship to support an advanced-degree student specializing in ecumenical theology. Donations may be made, in memory of Margaret, to St. Michael's Colleeae. 81 Saint Marv Street. Toronto ON M5S 1J4.*

*Máire Goss reports on the  
WOW Steering Committee's  
2012 Annual Meeting*



**I**n September 2012, Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), of which CNWE is a member, held its annual Steering Committee (SC) meeting at Hildegardshaus in Bingen am Rhein, Germany. The location has world heritage designation and is the homeland of the mystic Hildegard von Bingen – a woman who preached and was listened to almost 1000 years ago.

To get to know each other before the meeting, and to appreciate the historical significance of our meeting place, we shared a Rhine cruise from Bingen to St. Goar, marveling at the almost vertical vineyards and the 500+ year old castles along the river. At St. Goar, we visited a church known to some SC members, who shared their knowledge of the many frescoes in the church. We even shared some Taizé songs with a young couple who were visiting the crypt chapel at the same time. It was quite a moving experience.

In addition to CNWE, WOW SC members present represented the Australian groups Women in the Australian Church and Catholics for Ministry; UK groups Catholic Women's Ordination (CWO) and New Wine; We Are Church Ireland; Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), USA. The international groups Husetop (home of the [www.womenpriests.org](http://www.womenpriests.org) website), ICETH (International Conference of European Theologians), and RCWP (Roman Catholic Women Priests) were also represented. In addition, two individual members were present from Poland and Bangladesh, countries that do not have group affiliation. Each representative reported on the activities of her group, and of her own individual activities.

CNWE has been represented on the WOW Steering Committee for the past five years by Therese Koturbash. Therese has been very active as a member of the WOW SC, participating in awareness raising activities in Rome and working with Husetop. The September meeting was my introduction to the Committee as the next CNWE representative. Therese has left a high standard to follow.

The SC approved the creation of two new positions that will be reporting to the committee. Jennifer Stark, a former committee member, has agreed to take on the Archivist role and her first major task will be to find a new home for the materials that must be stored safely to maintain an integral history of WOW. Therese has accepted the Communications liaison position and has already proven herself in this role with her recent interview on the CBC Radio program *The Current*.

On our final evening, Annette Esser, of the Scivias Institute for Art and Spirituality, gave a presentation on women mystics in the context of today's feminist spirituality. Annette focused on the themes of inspired writing, longing for journey and experience, discovering one's inner space, and gaining self-knowledge, sharing her own artwork on these themes.

It was a very refreshing experience to be with the other members of the SC, learn of the issues they are dealing with in their regions, share ideas, and plan future activities on behalf of WOW. I am looking forward to participating on

## **HILDEGARD OF BINGEN NOW ACKNOWLEDGED AS 'DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH'** **CNWE's Press Release, October 5th, 2012:**

The Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE) celebrates the proclamation by Pope Benedict XVI on October 7th, 2012 of St. Hildegard of Bingen as a Doctor of the Church. St. Hildegard is only the fourth women to whom this title has been given and it is bestowed in recognition of the influence of her writing on Catholic theology and doctrine. St. Hildegard of Bingen was a 12th century mystic, prophet, teacher, poet, and musician who founded two monasteries. She was a respected leader in the medieval church who did not hesitate to call both emperors and popes to account. Her writing and music continue to inspire people and her example of faith and courage serve as a role model for Catholic women everywhere who work for equality and justice.

For over thirty years members of CNWE have shared a faithful commitment to social justice for all women. We celebrate the fact that we are part of a long history of women's contributions to the Christian faith. Our movement embraces a broad range of Catholic women and men across Canada for whom an inclusive church that is accountable to all of its members is important. Our work for women's equality in the church and the world is internationally respected and part of a network of pro-change Catholic movements around the globe. For further information on membership, see [www.cnwe.org](http://www.cnwe.org) or visit us on Facebook.

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## **KATERI TEKAKWITHA IS CANONIZED**

Kateri Tekakwitha was officially canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome on October 21. He then prayed to Saint Kateri, referring to her as protectress of Canada and the first native American saint, and entrusting to her the renewal of the faith in the First Nations and in all of North America. "May her example help us to live where we are, loving Jesus without denying who we are", he prayed. Although Kateri was born in New York state in 1656, she moved to Kahnawake, near Montreal, after she was persecuted for her Catholic faith. Known as the Lily of the Mohawks, she lived a holy life and died in Kahnawake at the age of 24.

Jocelyn Rait, Ottawa CNWE

## **CNWE's 2012 Retreat and Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

On June 16/12 CNWE members gathered together as local groups in different Canadian centres. We began by reflecting about becoming 'new wine.' We used the guidelines of Joanna Macy, known for her ecophilosophical activism (*The Work That Reconnects*).

Each group (and one singular) then hooked up with each other through Webinar for our AGM. One of the high points: the approval of a proposal from Toronto, viz., to reach out and connect with more Canadians, especially in western Canada. Proposed CNWE constitutional changes and a proposed CNWE name change were tabled until the 2013 AGM. (A draft of these changes will be forthcoming soon.)

*CNWE Ottawa on June 16. Note Jocelyn Rait, who chaired the AGM, at right.*



About 450 members gathered to hear several speakers celebrate the group's goal:  
**KEEP THE FAITH – CHANGE THE CHURCH.**

Two presenters were especially riveting: Jamie Manson of the *National Catholic Reporter* and Donald Cozzens, SJ, of John Carroll University. Manson reminded the assemblage that today's young Catholics have only known a Church mired in scandal. Cozzens, who has written on the modern priesthood, remarked that the belief of the Church as a monarchy lives on and is widely held by the Roman Curia, adding that many bishops cannot tolerate articulate, informed criticism.

The overriding theme focused on the necessity that the Church must have meaningful participation by the laity, including the ordination of women.

More information about the Conference and the organization may be downloaded at [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org)  
Submitted by Elizabeth McGahan, Saint John, NB

### Dangerous Women Creed by Lynne Hybels

Dear God, please make us dangerous women.  
May we be women who acknowledge our power to change,  
and grow, and be radically alive for God.  
May we be healers of wounds and righters of wrongs.  
May we weep with those who weep and speak for those who  
cannot speak for themselves.  
May we cherish children, embrace the elderly, and empower  
the poor.  
May we pray deeply and teach wisely.  
May we be strong and gentle leaders.  
May we sing songs of joy and talk down fear.  
May we never hesitate to let passion push us, conviction  
compel us, and righteous anger energize us.  
May we strike fear into all that is unjust and evil in the  
world.  
May we dismantle abusive systems and silence lies with  
truth.  
May we shine like stars in a darkened generation.  
May we overflow with goodness in the name of God and  
by the power of Jesus.  
And in that name and by that power, may we change the  
world.  
Dear God, please make us dangerous women. Amen.

(from Hybels' book, *Nice Girls Don't Change the World*. Zondervan. 2011.  
Printed with permission.)

Save the date!

**The CNWE Conference  
and  
Annual General Meeting**  
will be held in Sudbury at  
Cambrian College  
June 21 - 23, 2013.

Conference Focus:  
**Primacy of Conscience**

Keynote speakers:  
**Louise Akers and  
Catherine Cavanagh**



CNWE

CNWE Mission Statement: To enable women to name their giftedness and from that awareness to effect structural change in the church that reflects the mutuality and co-responsibility of women and men within that church.

## Want to sow some CNWE seeds?

You've heard of gifting and re-gifting, right? Please, think about this - gifting or re-gifting to someone (a new friend, an old friend, or someone you want to send a message to) with three issues of *The Seed Keepers*.

Fill in what's asked for below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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and then just make out a cheque for \$12 payable to "CNWE" and mail it to:



*The Seed Keepers*,  
P.O. Box 19594,  
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## The Seed Keepers



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Join, rejoin, renew! Hold a membership in CNWE!

Mail in your cheque, payable to "CNWE" for \$50 or, if you are unwaged, pay what you can (\$25 suggested) with the following information -

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