

Mary McAleese wants power sharing for women in the Catholic Church

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Former president of Ireland [Mary McAleese](#) has spoken out about the need for power sharing for women in the Catholic Church. She is currently in the U.S. teaching as a visiting scholar at Boston College.

She said increasing the power of the laity includes increasing the power and role of women in the church. [The Vatican](#) she pointed out is one of the few places in the world where women still cannot vote.

She said, "From the beginning, women have been the mainstay of the church." She added, "It's deeply offensive that they are not included in the decision-making process."

Pope Francis was the first pope to include women in the washing of the feet ceremony before Easter, but he has also restated that the church will not ordain women.

McAleese was speaking in an interview with the [Worcester Telegram & Gazette](#),

"There has to be a vehicle for the delivery of ecclesiastical services, and the best alternative is laypeople."

Talking about the Vatican II Council in the 1960's, which implemented several church reforms including celebrating Mass in English, she said, "It's been 50 years, and we have really seen no change." She



continued, "The church would be much better off, if the pope shared power with his college of bishops, and, if laypeople could become more involved." With the current decrease in vocations and fewer priests available to officiate at religious ceremonies, her call for more lay participation hits a chord.

McAleese pointed out that church canon says lay people have a responsibility to advise their pastors on religious matters. "It's not about fighting over issues, but discussing them." She continued, "Most people would be happy to lose an argument, as long as they have a chance to debate."

McAleese, who is currently serving as the Burns Library Visiting Scholar in Irish Studies at Boston College, published a book last year with Columba Press. Her work "Quo Vadis? Collegiality in the Code of Canon Law," examines how Vatican II's

reforms on power sharing between bishops and the pope have been sidetracked or unimplemented. She spoke about her book at the College of the Holy Cross on Tuesday, October 29, 2013.

Although [McAleese](#) recognizes that history shows it takes about 50 years for council reforms to be fully practiced, she hopes to see several power sharing changes during Francis' papacy.

"Pope Francis has spoken on the issue of collegiality, but it's too early in his papacy to rush to judgement."

She continued, "At this point, we have to take a wait and see attitude. We hear that he's a good cook. Now, we have to wait for the dinner."

Reykjavik Communique from the Porvoo Communion

The Porvoo Communion of Churches issued the following communique, "Justice faints and hope fades when the church looks in on itself", after its recent meeting in Reykjavik.

The Presiding Bishops of the Porvoo Communion of Churches, meeting in Iceland, unanimously agreed to the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain becoming full members of the Porvoo Communion of Churches. This decision was warmly welcomed by all

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present and is commended to the processes of the member churches as may be necessary.

The Presiding Bishops of the churches of the Porvoo Communion meet every other year to discuss matters of mutual concern, receive reports of activity within the Communion and to guide the future shared



Present at the meeting of Presiding Bishops of the Porvoo Communion of Churches were the Archbishops of Canterbury, Armagh (front left) and Dublin, and the Primus of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, Most Rev D Chillingworth (Second row).

work of the churches. At the meeting in Reykjavik, generously hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the Bishops shared news of developments in their churches and wider societies, particularly against the background of austerity and economic challenges faced by all the members of the Porvoo Communion from Portugal in the south to Finland in the north. Hope within the mission and service of the church was

seen as vital to the work of all the churches and their shared life. The Presiding Bishops also commented on the reports received on Porvoo consultations carried out on marriage; on issues related to migration; and on the diaconal ministry (ministry of service).

The Churches of the Porvoo Communion, based mostly in Northern Europe, are Lutheran and Anglican Churches that have signed an agreement to “share a common life in mission and service”. The name Porvoo comes from the Finnish diocese and city in whose Cathedral the Eucharist was celebrated on the final Sunday of the conversations in 1992 leading to the Common Statement and thus to the Porvoo Communion of Churches.

The Bishops, together with members of the local church and other Porvoo representatives, participated in two services of Holy Communion.

At the first, which took place in the Lutheran Cathedral (Domkirkjan) in the historic centre of Reykjavik, the Bishop of Iceland, Agnes M Sigurdardottir, presided.

In his sermon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: “Justice faints and hope fades when the church looks in on itself. The Kingdom of God is proclaimed by a church that is caught up in the glory of God and the reality of the world around..... If we are to continue to grow closer, so that our [Porvoo] communion becomes family, and that family becomes the transforming influence in our society, which is so desperately looking for a new way, after the decades of reliance on material growth have betrayed us; if that family is to become what it should, then we need each other more than ever, not for comfort in the cold, receding tides of Christian faith, but to stretch and challenge each other to an ever closer walk with God and evermore passionate fulfilling of his mission.” (The full text of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s

sermon can be found on the [website of the Porvoo Communion of Churches](http://www.porvoo.org/en/sermon)).

The Bishops closed the meeting with a commitment to meet again in two years in Edinburgh, hosted by the Scottish Episcopal Church, and to extend the duration of the meeting to enable a deepening of their engagement with each other.

- See : <http://anglicanink.com/article/reykjavik-communiqué-porvoo-communion#sthash.GEI43cgr.dpuf>

Presbyterian Peacemaker from Northern Ireland Touring Southwest Missouri

KSMU - Ozarks Public Radio report - Churches in Springfield, Hollister and West Plains are hosting a special guest from across the pond: a reverend from Northern Ireland whose mission is about community building and healing. KSMU’s Theresa Bettmann shares his story.

As a retired Presbyterian minister, Reverend Wilfred Orr is part of the International Peacemaker program within the church. He served for 40 years in Northern Ireland as a minister, and today takes part in the ongoing peacemaking efforts within the divided country of Ireland.

The peacemaking program includes people from Iran, Syria and other areas of the world dealing with conflict. Orr is touring the US for three weeks. He says he's been warmly received, and appreciates the opportunity to share his experiences for the sake of bringing people together.

“I’m part of a team currently that would be 9 or 10 itinerants like me. And the Presbyterian Church in America have



Dr Wilfred Orr with Kathy Morris of PCUSA

drawn them from various troubled spots. The idea, I think, is to express thanks to the States for the help we have received, and to update the States on what we have been doing,” Orr says.

Orr says one thing he enjoys about visiting the US is bringing the two countries closer together. It's "enriching," he says, to “expand one’s horizons beyond their local shores.” In the talks he'll give in the US,

Orr will discuss the current peacemaking process of Northern Ireland. He says his country is beautiful and supports growing tourism, and is often very different from what people think.

“The impression that we’re all at each other’s throats and that you can’t live a peaceful life in Northern Ireland is quite untrue. We have specific problems to deal with, and we have people living in ghettoed areas, and that is a problem. Difficulties to deal with that’s perfectly true, but let’s not blow the problem out of all proportion,” says Orr.

This is the second year that Orr has traveled to the United States from Northern Ireland as part of the Presbyterian Church's International Peacemaker program.

“The American [Presbyterian] church has invited me to talk a little bit about my work in Northern Ireland, and in a way to bring them up to date with what we’ve been doing in the field of reconciliation.

Partly a reporting business, and partly I get to gather of Presbyterians who essentially as Christians, although we live maybe 4,000 miles apart, are part of the same global church,” Orr says.

Reverend Orr will be speaking at several venues before he leaves for Chicago: they include the First Calvary Presbyterian Churches in Springfield and Hollister on Sunday. He's speaking at College of the Ozarks on Monday evening, and then traveling to West Plains on Tuesday to speak at the First Presbyterian Church and MSU-West Plains.

CNI note - Prior to his retirement Dr Orr was an Ecumenical Canon of Belfast Cathedral.

Priest smashed in face with hammer during robbery

A Catholic priest was severely beaten with a hammer by thieves who broke into his Jonesborough, Newry, parochial home.

At 11.30pm on Wednesday Father Dermot Maloney, Parish Priest at St Patrick’s



Church, Dromintee, discovered three youths in his office, at his home. They “smashed in the face with a hammer” breaking his teeth before locking him in the bathroom.

His attackers fled with his wallet and a small amount of cash.

The young priest escaped by climbing through the bathroom window. The [Belfast Telegraph](#) reports that Maloney was too distressed to comment.

Reacting to the news Sinn Fein MLA Megan Fearon said say had “visited Fr Maloney and he is extremely shaken by his ordeal. I am disgusted that people would target anyone in the community in this way.”

She added “I hope that Fr Maloney recovers from his physical injuries quickly and that he has the strength of mind to put this attack behind him.”

The [Tyrone Times](#) wrote about the young priest who had served as a young curate in Dungannon where he was known as the “chief fundraiser”. He is involved in the local community’s youth work and was chairman of the Dungannon Youth Resource Centre.

Gazette editor welcomes encouraging responses to call for a voluntary parades panel to regulate marching

Canon Ellis said: "I have had very favourable responses to the Gazette editorial's comments on the three issues of parades, flags and the past in [Northern Ireland](#), reports Alf McCreary in the Belfast Telegraph.

"Clearly, Dr Haass faces a huge challenge if he is to conclude his work by the end of this year, as planned, but I do have the impression that he and his Vice-Chair, Prof. Meghan O'Sullivan, are listening very carefully to all perspectives and proposals and are also thinking very deeply on the subject," he added.

Canon Ellis said the two US facilitators "are clearly prepared to think outside the box," and stressed the Gazette was trying to make "an honest and helpful contribution to the whole process."

Speaking on BBC Radio [Ulster](#)'s Sunday Sequence programme recently, Canon Ellis expanded on the Gazette's editorial comment by saying he envisaged a voluntary parades body as being cross-community in nature and being composed, not of politicians, but of representatives of the loyal orders and bands and as providing "self- regulation".

The proposed Parades Panel, he said, would provide people involved in the parading culture with an opportunity to “show leadership and responsibility for the common good”.

The two US facilitators "are clearly prepared to think outside the box,"



If the Panel failed to agree on particular parades, the decision would pass to the Parades Commission which would continue to exist to deal with unresolved cases.

Canon Ellis also suggested local authority regulation of the flying of flags such as on lamp posts. The Gazette described the current widespread practice as "tacky and shabby in the extreme" and as not showing respect to the flags themselves.

Canon Ellis said that there was too great an emphasis "in the public discourse" on issues relating to the Troubles past, and suggested there was a need to focus more clearly on the future for coming generations. However, he stressed that those who were suffering from the legacy of the Troubles needed "every attention and care".

Blasphemy reference in Constitution is 'largely obsolete' - ICC

The Irish Council of Churches said they acknowledge that the current reference

Prayer for Today

Eternal and all-merciful God, with all the angels and all the saints we laud your majesty and might. By the resurrection of your Son, show yourself to us and inspire us to follow Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

to blasphemy in the Constitution of Ireland is "largely obsolete".

They said in a statement last week that the blasphemy reference "may give rise to concern because of the way such measures have been used to justify violence and oppression against minorities in other parts of the world".

The Constitutional Convention spent two days this weekend debating whether or not the blasphemy provision should be removed.

Blasphemy

The Irish Constitution explicitly states that blasphemy – speaking sacrilegiously about God – should be a crime, although no-one has ever actually been prosecuted under it. Article 40.6.1.i states:

The publication or utterance of blasphemous, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law.

In a statement, the ICC said that ahead of the Convention, their members had been reflecting on the values and principles that "should underpin the human right to freedom of religion and freedom of conscience in a truly inclusive, pluralist Ireland".

Freedom of Religion

They added the promotion of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience

enriches the social fabric of a country, adding that it is a human right of faith communities to contribute to public life, including public debate on issues that are of importance to everyone, without being subjected to attack or ridicule, needs to be acknowledged and respected.

They stated: We consider that it is vital to ensure that the rights of individuals and communities to practice and live out their faith openly are protected by law. These guarantees may be better achieved through established or new constitutional and legislative provisions for the protection for freedom of religion, belief and expression, as well as legislation against discrimination and hate crimes.

Pro Life groups call BPAS advert in Irish newspaper 'disgusting' and 'callous'

The largest abortion provider in Britain has taken out an ad in The Irish Times saying: "We'll care for your women until your government does".

The Pro Life Campaign said that it is "disgusting" that the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) took out an advert in The Irish Times newspaper on Saturday.

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) [took out an advertisement in The Irish Times newspaper](#) with the slogan: "We'll care for your women until your government does".

Responding to the advert the Cora Sherlock of the Pro Life Campaign said that it was "disgusting" but "entirely

predictable that the BPAS would attempt to exploit the new abortion law in Ireland with a view to establishing abortion clinics here".

She said that ad in Saturday's Irish Times is all about publicity for the BPAS and has nothing to do with protecting women's lives.

She said that the BPAS has "zero respect for the rights of unborn babies".

Meanwhile, the Youth Defence group has also weighed in on the matter stating that Ireland has had enough interference from Britain, accusing the BPAS of "gross interference" in Ireland's affairs.



Spokeswoman Clare Molloy said that the advert was a "callous and distasteful bid to drum up business in Ireland".

BPAS says it has treated 'many thousands of women from Ireland' over the past thirty years, says women from Ireland who have abortions are being "wilfully ignored by the political establishment" and that the recent abortion legislation "will do nothing to help the women we see in our clinics every day".

“The women we see from Ireland are just like those from England – but made more

– gave addresses in the Republic of Ireland when attending British clinics and



hospitals for an abortion last year. The actual figure is likely to be even higher as not all women give their real address.

Government ministers – [including Justice Minister Alan Shatter](#) – have said there will be no more abortion

desperate by the financial and emotional cost of having to travel,” said Ann Furedi, the chief executive of BPAS.

BPAS said women from Ireland tend to have abortions later than average because they have to arrange travel and funding. The group said that almost one third of abortions for women from Ireland are carried out at 10 weeks and later, compared with just over a fifth of abortions for women from England.

The abortion provider said it had taken out the advertisement “in solidarity with the women who are denied legal, safe abortion in Ireland and those who campaign tirelessly for the legal change needed so women can access care at home”.

“No politician in a civilised country should force women to make a journey abroad for abortion care.” said Furedi. “The decision alone is a tough enough journey”.

The most recent figures show that 3,982 women – an average of almost 11 per day

legislation in the lifetime of this government, following the passing of the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Bill earlier this year.

The current law allows for abortion to be carried out in Ireland only in cases of a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother.

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