

One Spirit~One Call Service

September 26, 2010

Women's Perspectives

*Angela Kremer, Andrea Matsumura, Trish Bradley, Jackie Rossini,
St. Andrew parishioners*

All: WE ARE THE CHURCH!

Jackie:

We are the church. My name is Jackie Rossini and I am a woman seeking the path of wisdom. I am a cradle Catholic, a mother of daughters and sons, a grandmother and great-grandmother. Though I have jumped ship a few times in my life, twelve years ago I came back to the Church for good. Finally I realized that, while its policies and practices regarding the role of women still caused me pain, the Catholic Church needs to make room for me – I claim this church as my own, and I'm here to stay.

Andrea:

We are the church. My name is Andrea Matsumura and I am a leader. I believe good leaders ask critical questions. I am a physician; I am a wife and a mother of two young children. I am active in a Catholic parish that strives to live its social justice mission. And I ask: Why does the institutional church lag so far behind in affirming women's gifts and welcoming us to serve as we are called? As a physician, I am bound by a principle code in medical ethics: First, do no harm. As a Catholic, I am bound by my faith to follow my conscience.

Angela:

We are the church. My name is Angela Kremer and I am a woman of passion and Spirit. I believe in the great power of women when they live their potential as artists, workers, and leaders. I am 40 years old, mother of Soren and Anders, a community organizer and a woman called to ministry. After practicing ministry at a socially just Catholic women's college, I decided to study theology after working to minister to Catholic women. Over a decade ago, I wrote a thesis: "Discipleship: A New Paradigm of Vocation for Roman Catholic Women." Vocation is a calling in context of community but as a Catholic woman, I'm forced to ask: Can I use this gift? Will they let me lead? And at what cost?

Trish:

We are the church. My name is Trish Bradley and I am a person of hope and peace. I have been a Catholic all of my life, educated in Catholic schools. In high school I was educated by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and became an educator myself. I was an elementary school teacher, a principal, and personnel

administrator in the public school system. I have a keen awareness of the pain of discrimination among individuals and institutions.

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Trish:

Sr. Helen Mary was my 9th grade Math teacher. She was brilliant and compassionate. She could easily have been the CFO of any Fortune 500 company. But she listened to the call of the Spirit and her life's work was teaching young women. I am broken hearted that the Vatican is conducting what it calls a "visitation" of the women religious in the United States. I am angered by the process of these visitations and the fact that the findings are not going to be shared with the religious women. Their stubborn hope in the midst of this demeaning examination is remarkable.

Andrea:

Did God choose gender as a requirement to love, to lead, to serve? As a mother to both a boy and a girl, I want equal opportunity for both my children. I am an intentional parent and I take pride in teaching them values and building their character. Our church community reinforces our personal values of love, forgiveness and service. But what about equality? How do I explain to my daughter that she is excluded from a path her brother can take?

Angela:

My vocation is centered on community that I learned by leading liturgies in Appalachia and Selma, Alabama. And now parenting has added the reality of a global, ecological suffering to my perspective. I keep learning about justice with my children within our own neighborhood and city with hopes that they will recognize our greater human family. It's not just connected but truly interdependent. Exclusion is not only unfair, it sickens women and squeezes the life out of our spiritual community or threatens to tear apart our fragile web of hope. Each and every member of our church suffers because of the choices of our leaders. To raise my sons, I have to create gracious space to welcome those around me while living and questioning my choices. I'm trying to do that and it saddens me how far away we are from the needs of our world and our Church.

Jackie:

Ten years of living and working ecumenically in Asia awakened me to the richness and beauty of the worldwide church. One scene stands out for me: I was privileged to sit with "Asian Women Doing Theology" – a group of Korean and Japanese Christian women leaders reading Scripture together from a feminist perspective, to carry their insights back to their own congregations. I experienced the power of women when the gifts they bring to their churches are fully respected

and cherished. Those lessons came home with me and reshaped my expectations of myself and my church. My own renewal in theology, scriptural understanding, and spirituality prepared me to say “yes” to the call to serve. Yet the vibrant hope that Vatican II had awakened in me has gradually given way to disappointment as its reforms have been eroded. We women want to refresh and nourish this church. We await her unconditional “yes.”

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Andrea:

I dream of a Catholic Church that embraces a larger vision of God and God’s creation—one that is not limited to male images of God or demeaning ideas of women. My faith community understands that “social justice and feminism are inextricably linked,” and I dream of a time when the institutional church embraces that understanding.

Jackie:

I dream that soon we women, our daughters, and granddaughters will find ourselves truly reflected in the language of our liturgies, because language strongly shapes our aspirations and actions. Let the whole Church see that our God transcends gender, rejects narrow definitions of ministry, and blesses the deep desires of women to participate fully in the life of God’s Church, *our* Church.

Angela:

I dream of a groundswell in our church, a groundswell of women connected to each other. The first step to women raising our voices for justice is inner healing, listening and action. When we women embrace our beauty, our goodness, and our belovedness and reject the self-hatred in all its forms, the Spirit will transform our church through us. I dream of a truly global Church where women use their differences as a resource for justice while supporting our sisters in other faiths and life situations.

Trish:

St. Paul wrote to the Galatians (3:27-28): “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus.” I dream of a church where hierarchical structures and titles are done away with and secrecy is a thing of the past. I dream of a church that embraces collaboration and transparency, and honors and listens to those who have had no voice.

All: WE ARE THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH!

Angela: We are single, we are partnered;

Trish: We are widowed, we are divorced;

Andrea: We are mothers, we are daughters;

Jackie: We are sisters, we are aunts;

Andrea: We are among the Church's greatest assets;

All: **AND WE ARE THE CHURCH!**

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