Colm Holmes, Chair, We Are Church International

After 30 years We Are Church (WAC) participate in Vatican event for first time

We Are Church were delighted to learn that any groups who had taken part in the Synodal process could apply to take part in the Jubilee Synod in Rome 23-26 October 2025. This is the first time that We Are Church International were invited to participate in such an event in the Vatican. A total of 8 WAC delegates had their applications accepted by the Synod Office.

We Are Church has supported the Synodal process from the start and encouraged all in our network to initiate and participate in the process in their own countries. We see the Synodal process as taking up the 5 goals which WAC started out with 30 years ago.

A few days before the Jubilee Synod, the Synod Office wrote to say they were declining their invitation issued 2 months earlier to Martha & Gert, as they were concerned that “their participation could be used by anyone as a pretext for ideological purposes”. This was because the Synod Office had become aware that Martha & Gert Heizer were excommunicated in 2014 having been shown on Austrian TV celebrating a Eucharist in their home with friends and without an ordained male priest being present. Martha & Gert replied expressing their disappointment but understanding their caution; they also again expressed their support for the Synodal process and wished it success and the blessing of our good Lord. And so, while 8 WAC delegates travelled to Rome, only 6 attended the Jubilee events.

I was impressed by Pope Leo taking questions from 7 delegates from 7 different continents. Professor Klara Csiszar from Linz in Austria, asked about women in our church. Pope Leo gave a very poor answer which caused some laughter and applause: He said: “My mother regarded women not as equals, but superior to men!” Pope Leo also gave a better answer saying the main reasons were largely cultural – no mention of any theological arguments which have all long been found empty.

I had given some time considering how WAC might register our presence in a respectful way. Our yellow EQUALITY T-shirts from 2024 would not be appropriate. Instead, I proposed that we might focus on the pilgrimage through the Holy Door. WAC delegates carried the inclusive “Last Supper” on the pilgrimage around the Vatican, through the Holy Door and through St Peter’s as sign of Equality for women. This was certainly the high point of my visit to Rome.

I attended an excellent Workshop by Jesuit David McCallum on “Polarisation” which made references to both the church and political situations and proposed moving from “EITHER/OR thinking to BOTH/AND thinking.”

Pope Leo gave an important sermon on Sunday in St Peter’s: “The supreme rule in the Church is love. No one is called to dominate; all are called to serve. No one should impose his or her own ideas; we must all listen to one another. No one is excluded; we are all called to participate. No one possesses the whole truth; we must all humbly seek it and seek it together.”

Reflecting on our time in Rome with the WAC Team and networking with many from around the world, I myself have moved from a position of feeling our 5 goals are maybe another 30 years away to being much more optimistic and inspired – maybe 3 years?

Colm Holmes

Chair, We Are Church International

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