

When Women Wake



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY
2023

#EmbraceEquity



EDITORIAL

This month is a significant month for us as Christians and as Women. As Christians we are in the season of Lent journeying towards Easter and the celebration of New Life. As Women we celebrate the progress and achievements made by girls and women. We also reflect on the current situation of women impacted by world events, climate crisis, Covid 19 and remind ourselves of all that needs to be done towards gender parity. This day represents a journey, a process of celebrating the past, being inspired to take action today, and working toward a better future.

This issue of WWW takes us on that journey and emphasises the urgent need to critique our own thinking and those of others so that we see, feel and act with the heart and mind of Jesus every step of the way.

Focusing on International Women's Day, Chrisann Almeida Creado puts the IWD 2023 theme in perspective as she draws us into thinking about why equal opportunities aren't enough. People start from different places, so true inclusion and belonging require that we Embrace Equity before Equality, by being conscious that equality is not enough in an unequal playing field.

Sheffalle Karanjikar's uniquely designed quiz celebrates this day and adds so much to our understanding of its origin and significance.

The article, Love as AT-ONE-MENT prompts us to remember that any involvement of ours must be in imitation of Jesus who saw the oneness of all beings irrespective of race, gender, faith background or other areas on which people were discriminated against in his time. Being his disciples, we are called to respond with this lens of oneness to bring healing and restoration of justice in the Church and world.

A Woman's Journey through Lent, by Marcia D'Cunha challenges us to walk the Via Dolorosa, with the victims of abuse and violence in our midst who suffer from irreparable physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual damage. Her article calls us to be conscious of how misinterpretation and misuse of Christian Scriptures and traditions have contributed to this violence, guilt and suffering which victims experience, as well as to the rationalisations used by those who abuse and/or condone abuse.

Amelia Andrews introduces our new National Team for 2022-23 who were elected at our National Convention.

Looking back at our last connect, the Pictorial Highlights recall memories of our Convention. A more detailed report is available on our ICWM Website.

My dear friends, ICWM is YOU.... And it is with and through you living the ICWM mandate wherever you are, as the Spirit leads you to, that ICWM can work to make a difference in the situation of women and other vulnerable groups. As I wish you a holy season of Lent, I am confident the wisdom of Sophia will accompany us, guiding us to live our calling in our ecumenical oneness by putting on the heart and mind of Christ. May our activities and endeavours as individuals and as ICWM strive to witness the life giving, life enhancing resurrected, Christ always.

Blessings of Easter! Happy Women's Day.

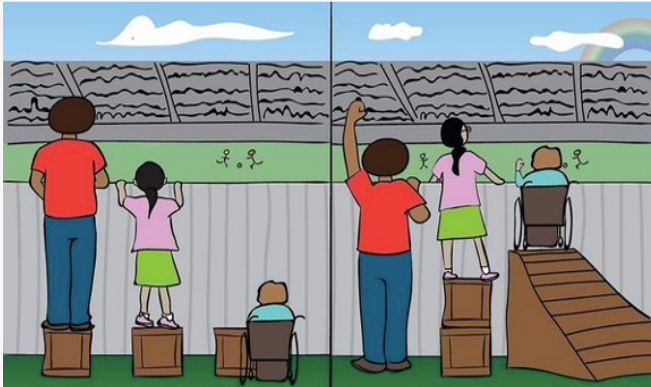
Raynah Marise

EDITORIAL	1
EQUITY BEFORE EQUALITY	3
A QUIZ FOR IWD 2023	5
LOVE AS AT-ONE-MENT	6
A WOMAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH LENT	8
MEET THE NEW FACES	12
3rd ICWM NATIONAL CONVENTION	15
NEWS & VIEWS ICWM Delhi – Mavis Russell	20
NEWS & VIEWS ICWM Mizoram – Lalngaih Zuali	21
ICWM RECOMMENDS	22

EQUITY BEFORE EQUALITY

Chrisann Almeida Creado

Striving for equality aims to create a level playing field, but it is essential to recognize that not everyone starts at the same place. People come from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and have varying needs and circumstances, which affect their access to opportunities and resources. This is where equity comes in, by taking into account these differences and addressing them through deliberate measures to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to succeed. For instance, we have the right to education act, providing equal access to education for all students.



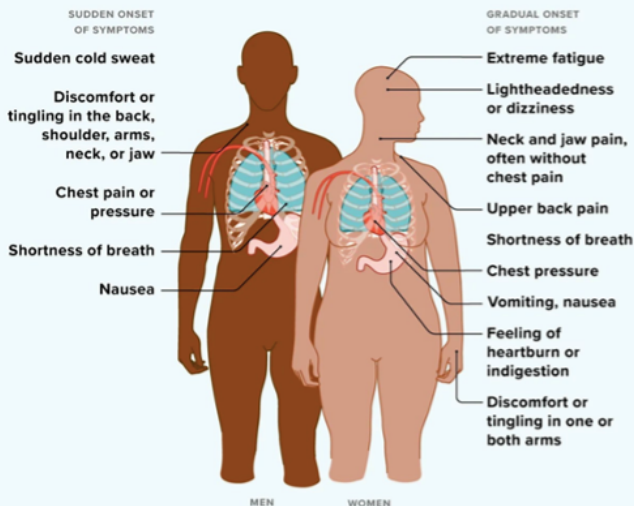
Yet this might not be enough to achieve equality if students do not have the same level of support and resources as others outside of school. In such cases, equity measures, such as providing extra support or resources to those who need it, may be necessary to

level the playing field.

Gender equality aims to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities, such as allowing women to own land or attend school. In contrast, gender equity aims to address past injustices that have held women back, such as societal limitations on employment. The objective is not to eliminate gender and make men and women identical, but rather to ensure that the most marginalized group has access to the same resources and opportunities.



WARNING SIGNS OF A HEART ATTACK men vs. women



This graphic illustrates the symptoms that are known to be more common for men and women, but crossover symptoms are also possible.

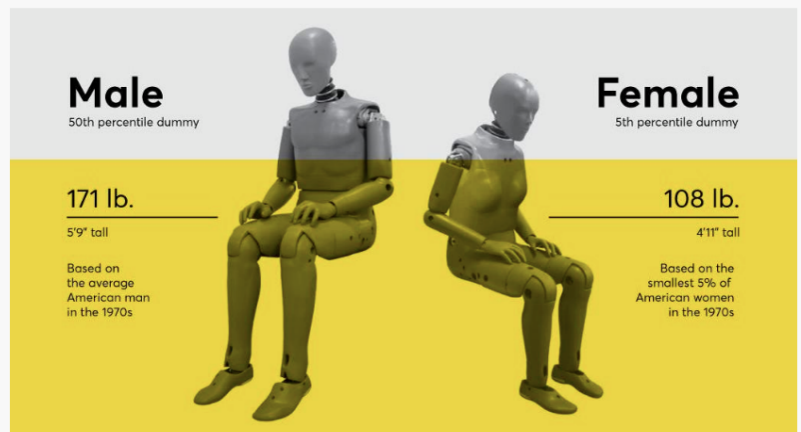
In certain situations, treating everyone the same can be dangerous. For example, women often experience different symptoms than men when it comes to heart disease and are more likely to die within a year of having a heart attack. Women also don't respond as well as men to certain heart-related medical procedures and clot-busting drugs. Researchers are only beginning to understand the biological, medical, and social reasons for these differences. The goal is to use this knowledge to improve prevention and treatment for women. However, this can only happen through equity, which involves recognizing that differences exist and working towards addressing them.

The disparity in heart attack care between genders is compounded by the fact that there is a lack of female representation in clinical research on coronary heart disease. It is essential to improve this situation, starting with addressing the dangerous assumption that women are not susceptible to heart attacks. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that treatment protocols cannot be identical and equal for men and women because medication doses and invasive procedures like angioplasties work differently in bodies with different anatomies.

The same applies in car design with women at greater risk from air bag and seat belt related injuries.

When female dummies are used in crash tests, they tend to be just smaller versions of the male ones. That means they don't reflect many of the anatomical and physiological differences between men and women, including differences in fat distribution, muscle strength and shape of the pelvis.

Thus, smaller people, including children are not adequately protected by airbags in cars. This is because where their bodies hit during a crash is completely different from that of a "default male". Equity in design would take these differences into account making safer vehicles for all.



While striving for equity is important, it is not immune to potential pitfalls. One such pitfall is the danger of falling into conservatism.

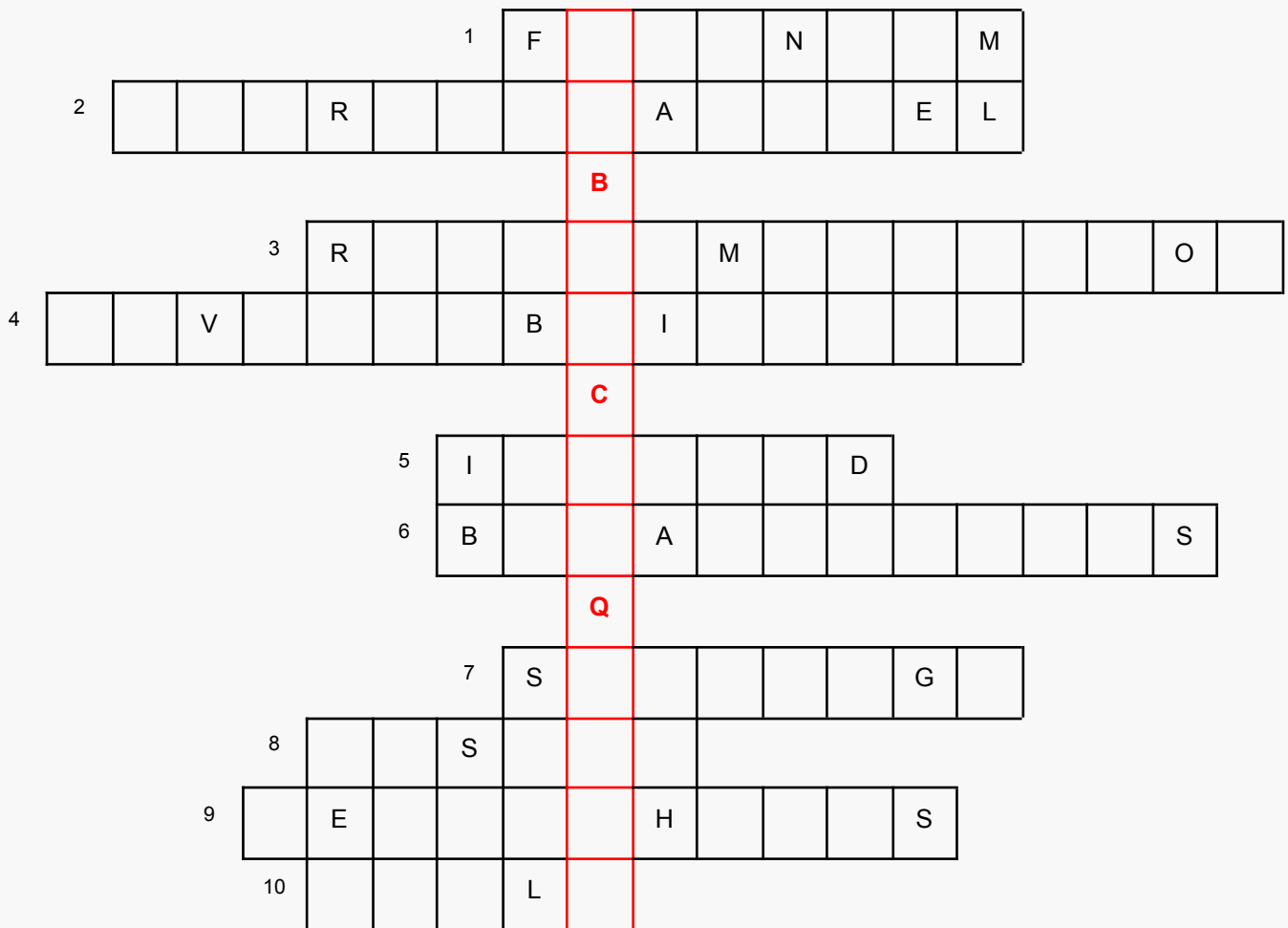
Conservative agents have appropriated the term equity to emphasize the idea of complementarity between men and women, promoting the concept of "separate but equal" and advocating for biologically predetermined roles and obligations for men and women in society. It is essential to be aware of these conservative arguments and not let them undermine genuine efforts towards achieving true equity for all individuals regardless of gender.

Overall, striving for equality and equity requires recognizing and addressing the systemic barriers that prevent equal opportunities and addressing them to create a fair and just society. When we embrace equity, we embrace diversity, and we embrace inclusion.

We embrace equity to forge harmony and unity and to help drive success for all. Equality is the goal and equity is the means to get there.

Chrisann Almeida Creado is a Psychologist & an Educational consultant. Passionate about gender justice.

A QUIZ FOR IWD 2023



THE THEME FOR IWD 2023 is # _____

1. This term defines the ideology that men and women are equal
2. The first female factory worker to rise to leadership in the Socialist Party
3. First Indian to crusade against sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriages
4. First Educated Woman in India
5. Which is the first country to make pay gap illegal
6. This was the hashtag trending in 2022 for IWD
7. The right to vote in political elections is known as
8. Which country has declared 8th March as a public holiday
9. Who is the missile woman of India
10. Bettisia Gozzadini became the first woman to attend university was from this country

Conceptualised by **Shefalle Karanjikar**, Member, ICWM Social Media Team

LOVE AS AT-ONE-MENT

Raynah Marise

As a catechetical trainer and faith formator working with youth and adults, when I ask people what the most important aspect/teaching of their faith as Christians is, the answer I get most often is, “Jesus suffered and died for our sins”. Unfortunately, this season of Lent sees religious services and homilies focussing on our sins and Jesus’ consequent suffering and death! It never ceases to surprise me how we have completely missed the bus as far as understanding the teaching of Jesus - the legacy he left behind.

Are we a people so stuck in Jesus’ “suffering and death”, that we have complete amnesia of the fact that he lived – teaching us by his words and works what it meant to be children of God, and that by his resurrection, he continues to be a definite presence even today albeit in and through us.

This Lent my fervent prayer is that we as faithful try and reflect on the core message of Jesus, on the reason for his death and the meaning they have for us today!

His main challenge through all he said and did was for people to examine the way they thought about and related with those they “othered” - the sick, possessed, ‘sinners’, gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, leaders, etc. He challenged their understanding of ‘living by rules’ and gave them (and us) just one law to live by: loving God and loving our neighbour AS ourselves.

He showed us that loving God, meant knowing God and seeing myself, others and all of creation as part of this generous phenomenon that emerged from love, is sustained by love, that must exist as manifestations of love in the present, so that our destiny too can be love.

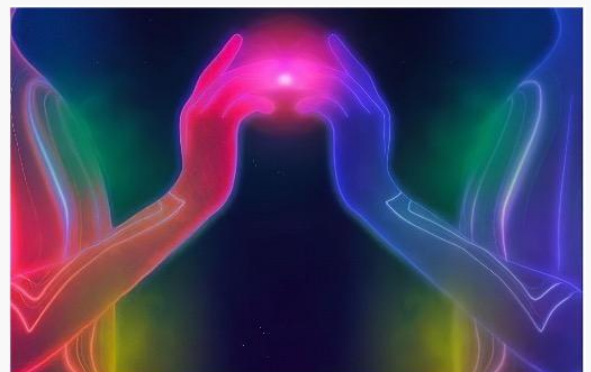


What is this Love we so blithely speak about?

Jesus reveals love as an experience of relationship and connection, one that affirms belonging and bonding to make us one body despite our differences of form and nature. Perceiving with the eyes of love, sees justice, unity, concern, care and responsibility for the wellbeing of all. It calls us to see everything as another. ‘I’ – an

extension of myself whether human or otherwise. It is being at-one with everything as only then can I love as God loves in ways that are generous, inclusive, unconditional and non-judgmental.

As modelled by Jesus, my love must manifest as a focus on the enabling of life being lived in fullness by my neighbour, my enemies, those who love me, those who don’t and caring for everything that sustains the world... for we are all connected by the thread of divine oneness and there is no ‘other’.



From “Synergy” by Alyssia Strasser Courtesy Integral Christian Network

Jesus showed us what inclusive love looked like, its potential and the wonderful possibilities it generated for healing, providing, comforting, consoling, and enabling abundance of living; the courage it engendered to challenge persons and structures that denied or thwarted this right to live in fullness and harmony that was the divine intention.



Most importantly, Jesus demonstrated how this way of living and loving meant being open to persecution, disapproval, being perceived by others especially the powers that be, as a rebel, a troublemaker, a threat! But that did not stop

him. He persisted in loving ALL, AS HIMSELF in imitation of the divine creator....

The Hearts have it - Courtesy Integral Christian Network

The consequences of his conscious choices to love were the reason he “suffered and died”. This is what is meant when we say he ‘suffered and died” for us. This was the reward for his being at-one with everyone and everything in every moment, This then is AT-ONE-MENT ... a life lived conscious of oneness with all, without distinction, every moment that we live..

Can we then be Christ’s disciples if we chose to lose ourselves instead in pious practices and religious services instead of living according to the mind and heart of Christ himself?

Isaiah 58:6 tells us ” Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

Can we continue reciting prayers, when he taught us that prayer was living in communion with the divine and with others, that it was forgiving, providing, accompanying each other and not just words that we recite. Prayer he showed us was thanksgiving, surrender, time spent with the creator discerning what needs to be done, being strengthened to live what one discerned was the way to love in different situations, and being confident of divine accompaniment as one lived and loved !

We can no longer dump the onus to heal and comfort on some distant, ephemeral entity. We are other Christs, empowered by the Spirit to live as children of the Divine in the way he showed us. Our focus on an individual relationship with a distant divine, external to me, is nothing less than Peter’s denial or Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. Ignoring the divine within me that wants to be in healing and caring harmony with the divine in all of creation, in particular the ones excluded, abused, exploited and deprived of their dignity is betrayal of the very Christ I claim to follow.



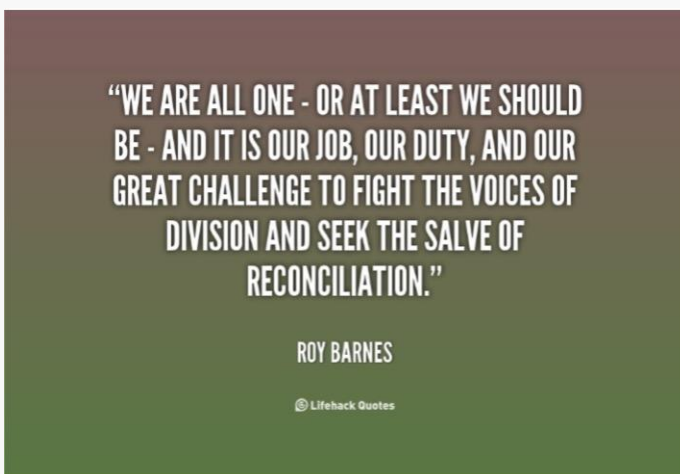
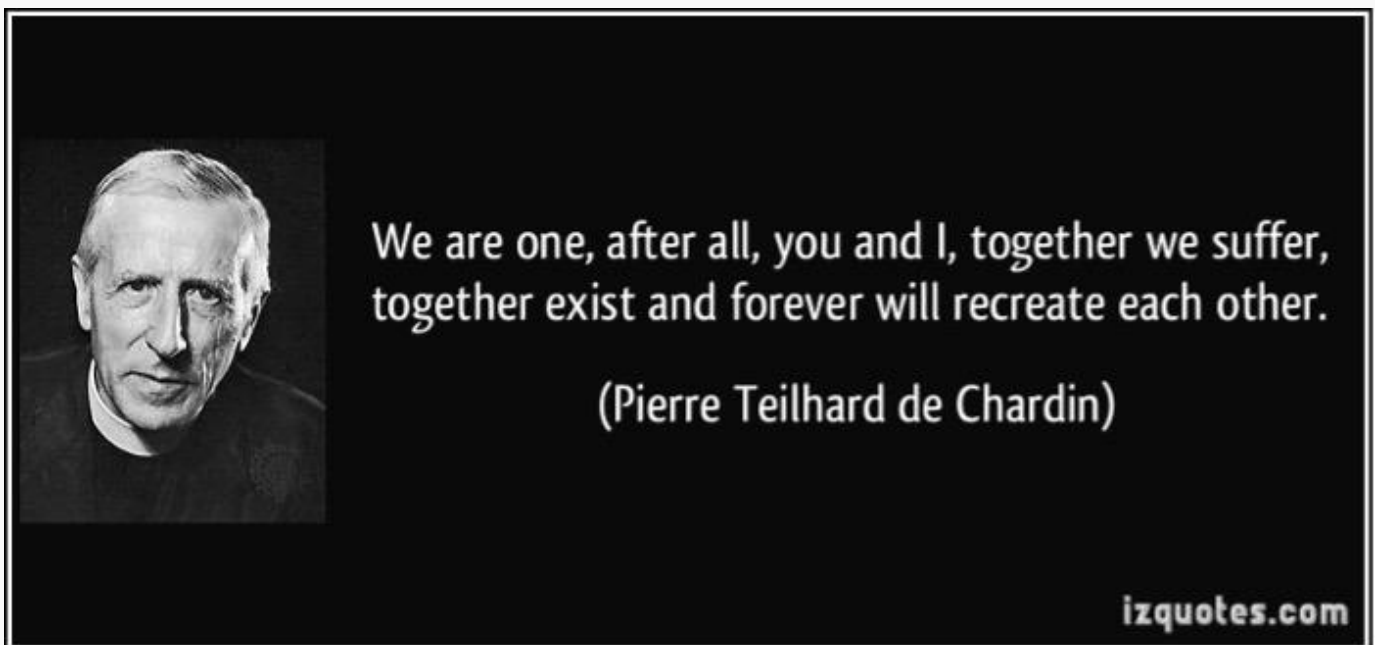
Let us break through the selfish focus on our individual salvation and our fear of the powers that be that makes us apathetic, unresponsive and silent to the various kinds of abuse, exclusion, silencing and injustice that goes on in our Church and society. Our silence makes us complicit in the cover-up of abuse, protection of the abusers, silencing of dissenting and challenging voices that Church and Society leaders carry out in the name of the divine. We cannot pretend ignorance of the fact that the Church we are in provides a counter witness to Christ

and his teachings. Let us choose to be part of the divine dance and like Jesus to “loosen the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, break the heavy yokes” of other I’s. May we choose to be sensitive to the pain, anguish, neglect and isolation experienced by others and by creation and accompany them in their struggle to regain the dignity that is their right.

The maxim ‘Love your neighbour AS yourself’ necessitates that we cannot see the neighbour wounded and alone as apart from me... I am responsible for their situation, for their healing, for their salvation; for in Christ I am one with them, there is no ‘other’!

From “Synergy” by Alyssia Strasser - Courtesy Integral Christian Network

Raynah Marise is the new National Convener of ICWM.



A WOMAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH LENT

Marcia D'Cunha

As Secretary of the Archdiocesan Women's Commission of Bombay, one of my duties was to plan and organise the Women's Day celebrations. Lent invariably coinciding with 8th March was a kind of spoiler. In time I made my peace with the problem. After all, Women's Day celebrations are generally laced with the bitter herb of women's stories of pain.

Unfortunately, the church down the centuries has glorified the suffering Christ instilling feelings of shame and blame (against the Jews – how else did Hitler's holocaust garner support?! As a child I was moved to tears by images of the broken Christ – the scourging, his bloody crown of thorns, his repeated falls, the torn bleeding flesh, his lonely death on a Cross... The Stations of the Cross, 3-hour Agony and homilies all dwelt upon these painful images and my child's mind failed to grasp the connect between my sins and Christ's suffering. Over time, I felt the services were cut off from the everyday lives of people, much like the strict Sabbath observances, sack-cloth-and-ashes-repentance and obsession with the letter of the law of the Pharisees of old, that Jesus tried to reform.

Via Dolorosa

Today as I look around me, I see the Via Dolorosa, winding its way through my own streets.

At one station there is Celine who falls under the weight of her crippling arthritis. She falls. She rises ... in pain and despair, not knowing what the next fall will do to her. "Haven't I had enough suffering?" she asks me. She rarely speaks of her tough journey, as she single-handedly raised her two sons.

At another station, I meet Josephine. Driven by despair, she approached her parish priest for counsel, as she and her children were subjected to domestic violence, night after night. "Christ suffered," said the unmoved parish priest, as if in explanation. "But one of these days he will kill me," she cried. "Then you will be a martyr for Christ," was his shocking, almost unbelievable reply.



Does Christ's suffering justify violence? Not only do these women suffer for years but the psyche of their children is also damaged. Adv Flavia talks about how the trauma within her abusive home, reflected in the dishevelled appearance of her kids. They were subjected to scorn and derision, by 'good Catholic' children and even their Catechism teachers. Has the church ever considered the impact of abuse on the faith of women and children?

Lenten homilies

Lenten homilies seldom talk about the sin of violence against women. And of course, it is probably never confessed.

Homilies urge people to abstain from all addictions and so Lent brings temporary relief to the wives of a few men. Come Lent, they give up the bottle for 40 days, demonstrate their self-control and convince themselves they are not alcoholics. Needless to say, their wives and children, live in fear of Easter and the bingeing that will follow.

It is time we realise that the misinterpretation and misuse of Christian Scriptures and traditions have contributed to violence against women and children, to the guilt and suffering which victims experience,



as well as to the rationalisations used by those who abuse. Clergy must realise that in their effort to save violent marriages, they do irreparable damage to the victims (women and children) physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually.

Reclaiming Scripture

On the other hand, our Scriptures are full of amazing stories of women, and reading them in Lent is eye-opening, especially as some of them are never read in our churches.

It is a woman, not the 'chosen' apostles or even the high priests of the day, who anointed Jesus' head for burial (Mk 14: 1-9, Mt 26: 6-13), and Jesus acknowledges her action saying, "wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Sadly, in the androcentric Church, this version of the anointing passage is NEVER proclaimed from the lectionary and we have even lost her name. What's more at the Archdiocesan Chrism Mass held last year in the Holy Name Cathedral, we see a church full of priests who are entrusted with the Holy Oils! Women are not even represented.



On Maundy Thursday, we commemorate Christ's "mandate," when, as he washed the feet of his disciples, he said, "A new commandment I give you, love one another: as I have loved you." ([John 13:34](#)). The idea of humility in service is so important in John's Gospel that he has no other account of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. This aspect of service seems to be lost in clericalism. In a literal imitation of the biblical Jesus washing the feet of his (male) disciples, only priests and men could have their feet washed between 1950 and 2016. Many parishes have still to open up the service to women, despite Pope Francis' decree.

Above all else, the crux of our faith: Christ suffered, died, was buried and rose from the dead (1 Cor.15: 3-4), this kerygma was entrusted to the first Christian community. Yet the only witnesses of his death,



burial and resurrection were women. Strangely the male Gospel writers who forget to name women, and ignore their presence in the Upper Room at the Last Supper and all through Jesus' ministry, do not hesitate in acknowledging their presence here, because these women were the only living witnesses! Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all the Gospels. The others mentioned are Mary the mother of Jesus, Joanna (wife of Chuza), Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome the mother of James and John and Mary wife of Cleopas! Of course, John is mentioned only in John's Gospel! Clearly, God entrusted the most

powerful and important news in human history to these women first! "Go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." (Mathew 28:7) Yet women today are not permitted to proclaim the Gospel from a pulpit or preach a homily!

Perhaps it is no wonder that women accompanied Christ, when he appeared to be a failure. They had never known a man like him in their patriarchal world. A prophet and teacher who had no gender barriers. He spoke, taught and discussed theology with them, as he did with the men. That's why they responded so whole-heartedly, as compared to the Apostles who were conspicuous by their absence when Christ needed them the most. In fact, even when he was trying to prepare them for his suffering and death, their only concern was whether they could sit at his right or left hand. Judas betrayed him. Most apostles went into hiding. Peter denied Christ, yet we use the Petrine principle to seal the coffin on women's ordination.

Jesus connected with women so differently from the condescension of our Church fathers. Perhaps, like the apostles before Pentecost, our faith leaders in the Vatican have yet to get the message: The cross is about giving up power. No mitre but a crown of thorns, no silk robes just a loin cloth, no throne or Presidential chair but the Cross, no sceptre just arms open wide in surrender.

Fr. Stan Swamy is one Christian in recent times, who lived out the message of the Cross. Are we like him, willing to comprehend and embrace what the heart of the Gospel, the Cross, means for us?

Marcia D'Cunha is former National Secretary of the Indian Christian Women's Movement and was a member of the Bombay Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission for over 10 years.

MEET THE NEW FACES

ON THE ICWM NATIONAL TEAM

Amelia Andrews

Not really new to us, most of them are long-serving committed ICWMers who believe in embracing the marginalised, speaking up for the voiceless and are deeply rooted in faith. The social media team of ICWM wishes them all the best as they lead and grow the movement in India.



Raynah Marise, National Convenor:

With extensive experience as a Volunteer Trainer in Education, Faith Formation, and Gender Concerns, Raynah's contribution to women's rights and empowerment spans across national and international levels. Her belief in critical thinking has led her to work towards ending the denial of dignity and rights faced by vulnerable groups who are 'othered' due to gender, sexual orientation, sexuality, etc. Raynah sees ICWM's mission as a vital calling for Christians across denominations to challenge people's thinking, amplify silenced voices, and work towards the spread of God's reign. In her view, changing mindsets is the key to behaviour change and achieving justice, love, and respect for all.



Neerja Prasad, National Secretary:

Neerja retired as the Director of Personnel and Administration at the Geological Survey of India. She has been an active member of the YWCA and India Peace Centre, and has served as both President and Secretary of the CNI-Synodical Women's Fellowship for Christian Service for a period of nine years. She has also served as the Convener of the ICWM Nagpur Chapter, and was the Founder Secretary of the Geological Survey of India (GSI) Women's Council for six years. She has also been a member of GSI's Internal Complaints Committee. Additionally she served as the Convener of the Mary Jones Women's Fellowship at the Bible Society of India in Nagpur.



Santha George, National Treasurer:

Santha is a Marthoma Church member from Tiruvalla, Kerala, presently in charge of Abhaya Bhavan. She was the Treasurer of Theologically Trained Women of India from 1992 to 1996. She also served as General Secretary of Marthoma Church's Women's Auxiliary from 1996 to 1999 and 2002 to 2005, and as Vice-President from 2011 to 2014. She was also the Program Coordinator for the Kerala Council of Churches' Ecumenical Development Program. She has written articles about women's rights and gender justice for magazines and books, besides being a resource person for virtual knowledge and training sessions.



Aruna Gnanadason, Ex-officio Member:

Aruna is the former National Convenor of ICWM has a doctorate in ministries in feminist theologies from the San Francisco Theological Seminary USA. She directed the global programme on Women in Church and Society and the Justice, Peace and Creation work of the World Council of Churches, Geneva from 1991 till 2009. She is a member of the Church of South India. She headed the All India Council of Christian Women, of the National Council of Churches in India (1998-2003). She has published many articles in books and journals, has edited and authored books in India and globally and has travelled extensively. She now lives in Bangalore.



Anita Cheria, National Team Member:

Anita is the Co-Founder-Director of OpenSpace, a campaign support organization. For over 30 years, she has worked in the social sector, supporting and consulting with various campaigns and organizations. Her written work focuses extensively on human rights, right defenders, and governance issues related to marginalized communities such as Adivasis, Dalits, sexual and gender minorities, and women in religious spaces. Anita is actively engaged with issues of justice, patriarchy, and exclusion within the churches in India and is a member of several Ecumenical, Catholic, and secular progressive women forums in the country. Presently, she consults with the Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF) as their India consultant and works with the Justice

Coalition of Religious (JCOR) on justice issues and Catholic Religious on justice and SDG goals.



Merlyn Dsa, National Team Member:

Merlyn, a mother of two, has an impressive track record of accomplishments. She retired as the Principal of a High School and Junior College in Mira Road and served as the Coordinator of the Bombay Archdiocesan Women's Commission in the Bhaindar Deanery. Merlyn is a member of the national team of the Indian Christian Women's Movement (ICWM) and has been an elected Municipal Councillor of Mira Bhaindar Municipal Corporation for 15 years, serving three consecutive terms. She has initiated several cells in her parish, including the Civic and Political Cell, Bombay Catholic Sabha Mira Road unit, and Women's Cell. Merlyn has served as a Parish Council member for nine years. She is a catechist, a member of the choir, was

a delegate to the Synod in 2001 and a Core Committee member for the construction of the new Church and Anubhav Inter-Religious Spirituality Centre.



Dr. Rini Ralte, National Team Member:

After serving as the Chairperson and Professor of the Women's Studies department at the United Theological College in Bangalore and being a founding member of ICWM Bangalore in 2016, Dr. Rini Ralte is now retired and resides in Mizoram. She remains an active member of the National Team of ICWM and is dedicated to various aspects of mission work for vulnerable sections of society, including People of Concerns (POCs). Dr. Ralte currently leads the Magdalene Society with prayer, Feminist Hermeneutics, and people's movements, as she continues to make a positive impact on her community.

Amelia Andrews is a member of ICWM's National Social Media Team.



3rd ICWM NATIONAL CONVENTION

Pictorial Highlights



Dr Kochurani Abraham and the Kerala Team set the tone with their beautiful Prayer Service. Breathing together as one, we were inspired to rise like Maya Angelou.

Keynote Address 1: Dr Aruna Gnanadason, ICWM National Convenor put forward the Vision of the Convention, even as she introduced **Aruna Roy, Keynote Speaker**, and founder of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakthi Sangathan. She spoke from her own life, modelled on Gandhi's Seva (work), Sangarsh (struggle) and Samarthan (advocacy). She invited us as followers of Christ to be keepers of his compassion and love and to be critical of the use of faith for politics. The best way to deradicalize India and speak truth to power is to use an important weapon RTI (Right To Information Act).



Marcia D'Cunha, National Secretary, ICWM presenting the 3-year ICWM National Report. **Dr Joycia Thorat, National Treasurer, ICWM** next presented a brief overview of the finances received and their allocation.

Dr Rini Ralte introduced Shiluinla Jamir, 2nd Keynote Speaker, who explained the concept of God's grace, in the context of tribal bonding together in pain through the experience of 'aayaakho ojala'. Dr Shilu drew us to the sentiment of the women at the tomb, mourning their loss, and ours in our context of being on the edge of frustration seeking liberation.



Deepening the day's experience, **Sr Clare** got the group charged through humming the We shall Overcome refrain and the young girls from Nagaland and Assam led us in the Break the Chain dance experience. The Session concluded with the girls leading us in a liberative dance, **BREAK THE CHAIN.**

Dr Thuamteii Aizwal and her team from the North-east, lead us in the Opening Prayer on Day 2





Anita Cheria animating a lively discussion between activists of Bangalore: Madhu, Nasreen and Nisha, Maitreyee who on their own and collectively impact society positively.

In a society that has invisibilised the pain of non-gender conforming persons, **A Revathi** presented before us through an intense drama in Tamil, the pain-filled journey of a Trans-person.



Moderator Sushma Ramswami took the 7 Regional Units through a discussion on the work they had undertaken over the last 2 years that extended to 3. Here the Delhi team presents.



A meaningful Ecumenical Eucharist led by all-women Chennai clergy team, opened proceedings on Day 3.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
A conversation between the old Convener Aruna and the new Convener Raynah.



OUT-GOING ICWM NATIONAL TEAM 2019-2022: (left to right)

Adv Sr Julie George (Mumbai), Dr Kochurani Abraham (Kerala), Dr Joycia Thorat (Mumbai), Dr Aruna Gnanadason (Chennai), Marcia D'Cunha (Mumbai), Dr Thuamteii Aizwal (Mizoram), Sushma Ramswami (Delhi).



NEW ICWM NATIONAL TEAM 2022-2024: (left to right) Dr Aruna Gnanadason (Chennai), Anita Cheria (Bangalore), Raynah Marie (Pune), Santha George (Kerala), Neerja Prasad (Nagpur), Dr Rini Ralte (Mizoram), Merlyn Dsa (Mumbai)

The Induction of the new ICWM National Team and Blessings showered on them all.





Participants at the 3rd National ICWM Convention Sept-Oct 2023



NEWS & VIEWS ICWM Delhi – Mavis Russell



The national capital has been the hub of a lot of Activism lately and ICWM Delhi swung into action, right after the Convention. Chalo Jantar Mantar was the call: Quit Hate. Save the Constitution. On Jan 30th the Anniversary of our Mahatma's death, ICWM joined hands with other Activists to reinforce the Mahatma's message.



ICWM Delhi joined hands with 22000 Christians from various other Christian groups to protest Violence against Christians in various parts of India on 27th February, 2023.

Delhi ICWMers relaxing at their picnic.



NEWS & VIEWS ICWM Mizoram – Lalngaih Zuali



Some of the activities Of ICWM Mizoram Unit:

1. We had meetings cum membership drive after some intervals in the capital.
2. We donated (twice) cooking materials, warm blankets, bed sheets, towels, money and many more items whatever needed for Myanmar refugees came to Mizoram.



You are invited!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 March 2023

#EmbraceEquity

VENUE

JM Lloyd Hall, Synod Office
12-2 pm

Women in Black
2-4 pm
Sikulpuikawn
Dress Code - Black

Organised by
Indian Christian Women's Movement, Mizoram (ICWM)
Association of Theologically Trained Women India
Magdalene Society

Contact: +91 8131059203
+91 9383074647

We observed International Women's Day in the last two years fruitfully and intend to observe the coming Day on 8th March at one of the best halls in town.

ICWM RECOMMENDS

JAYA JAYA JAYA JAYA HEY - Ranjini Nair

(Reproduced from the Indian Express, 15th January 2023)



The movie marks an important moment in Indian and Malayalam cinema where overtly masculine displays of power and prestige are wielded to more feminist ends. In doing so, it allows us to question both the presence of the fight scene, as well as the gendered expectations of the viewer.

In the film *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), it might seem as though the eponymous protagonist Jaya, or Jayabharati, had taken Rani's advice to heart.

Remember that infamous episode of Rajeev Masand's Roundtable where Rani Mukherjee made all of us cringe in second-hand embarrassment? She suggested that women who don't fight back when they are sexually harassed are at fault, and that compulsory martial arts training would be enough to fix the problem. She also made martial arts sound effects while Alia Bhatt and Deepika Padukone attempted to bring some nuance into the conversation. It was horrific to watch. Because not only does she imply physical violence as a solution to a deep-seated systemic issue which leaves women vulnerable, she also condones the patriarchal idea of women being responsible for the action of men around them.

In the film *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey* (2022), it might seem as though the eponymous protagonist Jaya, or Jayabharati, had taken Rani's advice to heart. For her, the only way out of an abusive marriage, is to learn how to fight back. When Jaya lands that first kick, the husband is sent flying across the room, crashing into a table which breaks on impact. The exaggeration in the scene immediately caused me to surmise that this had to have taken place in Jaya's head. That the shot would return to her meekly making her way into the kitchen, having played out the delicious crunch of the table breaking on impact, the firmness of her foot on caving into his soft belly within her imagination. I do not know if others felt similarly.



But the movie entirely subverts that expectation. The scene is not a figment of Jaya's imagination. It has really taken place. The table remains broken. The husband is left with an ache in his lower abdomen. The material remains of her training are presented as evidence of her new-found physical capabilities. The footprints on the bathroom walls where she has practised her sure-footed kicks, the pillow hanging limply from a tree in the back of the house where she has honed her punches, and long white twists of fabric in the cupboard which she used to wrap and protect her hands with. The dramatisation of the scene reminds us that the directors are not actually suggesting this as a remedy for those facing domestic abuse. It is satire, much in the same club as *Darlings* (2022) not actually suggesting that one has to drug and kidnap husbands. Instead, the reactions are meant to highlight just how desperate and bleak the situation appears to those who face domestic abuse.

These reactions don't suggest plausible solutions, and instead the films largely focus their attention on highlighting the issue at hand, and the very real apathy of society towards these women. But what was interesting to me, while watching this film was this immediate assumption, I made on the kick being in Jaya's imagination. While the use of hyperbole in this first kick, as well as in the two fight sequences could suggest the fight against domestic violence and patriarchy as both literal and metaphorical, there is one more point to be made. My assumption emerged entirely from my never having seen the average female lead take part in a fight sequence in the same way that men do on-screen. If a Dulquer, or indeed Basil Joseph (playing the abusive husband) himself had undertaken a similar fight, I would not jump to the hasty conclusion of it being a dream sequence. The average film-viewer is attuned to the larger-than-life physical prowess and capabilities of the male hero. I have never seen a similar visual used for female leads, of the ordinary, everyday variety like Jaya.



And so, when I saw Darshana Rajendran as Jaya carry out those moves my suspension of disbelief, which I carry in ample supply to Indian movies, ran short. This points towards how the movie has not just created a well-executed storyline which drives home the point without preaching, but also how it pushes audiences themselves to examine what they expect out of certain genders playing themselves out on screen. When everyday men can have fight scenes shot in excruciating slow-motion, with sound effects to boot, vegetable carts toppling and entire marketplaces destroyed, why can't Jayabharati have a similar moment in the sun.



The last fight sequence, where she thrashes her ex-husband's workers who have come to shut down her business, had me wanting to clap and whistle in the same way that I have seen men in theatres do during fight scenes. My intent is not to glorify violence or say that fight sequences are an ingrained part of commercial cinema, and there is nothing problematic about them. Instead, I am trying to highlight how as viewers we ourselves enter into the fictitious world of cinema with certain gendered societal rules intact, even if we are willing to forgo all laws of physics when it comes to men fighting. In disrupting expectations by having an ordinary woman have extraordinary martial moves, Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey to me marked an important moment in Indian and Malayalam cinema where overtly masculine displays of power and prestige are wielded to more feminist ends. In doing so, it allows us to question both the presence of the fight scene, as well as the gendered expectations of the viewer, which cinema is afflicted by while in the real world one must never listen to Rani Mukherji, in the cinematic universe women fighting might indeed have a role to play in upturning patriarchal notions of how women are performed.

Ranjini Nair is a Kuchipudi practitioner and PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge

Email: icwmjan14@gmail.com | **Website:** www.icwmindia.org | **Twitter:** @icwm_india
Editorial Team for this issue: Amelia Andrews, Marcia D'Cunha, Joycia Thorat, Raynah Marise, Seena Abraham, Shefalle Karanjikar
Masthead: Anil Kulkarni | **Newsletter Design:** Sunil Pimenta