

An Equal World is an Enabled World

#IWD2020 #EachforEqual



Anujath Sindhu Vinaylal

14 year old Anujath won the most recent prestigious 'Shanker's International Award' for the best works-of-art from children across the globe towards this painting. The painting titled 'My mother and neighboring mothers' is set against a rural landscape and portrays mundane life. The burst of colours brings out a sense of certain beauty in everyday chores undertaken by the painter's mother and other rural women.

“My mother was my biggest cheerleader, and she would always encourage me to make each painting better than the previous one. With her faith and my father's support, I hope to pursue this professionally after I complete my studies,” says Anujath, the artist.



Equal Discipleship

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Editorial - Virginia Saldanha.

Every Women's Day we celebrate the gains of the women's movement and express our aspirations for a better future.

So, let us take a look at what we should be celebrating/aspiring to for this 2020 Women's Day.

We have much to celebrate in the decades since the women's movement in India took shape in the early 70s, women have made gains which older women did not enjoy. However, we also know we cannot rest on our achievements as in some areas, we have managed only to crack open the door and put our foot in. We have not been fully welcomed in many spaces, especially religious spaces where women's right to equality has yet to be fully recognized.

The UN theme for **Women's Day 2020** is **"I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights"**. There is no doubt that the 21st century woman is increasingly becoming uncompromising in her demand for equality with man in every area. While legally, women have been granted many rights and protections, in practice this is far from reality. It is because mind sets have not changed. Patriarchy still frames our lives in the family and in our personal interactions with men.

A hash tag **#EachforEqual** is trending. It says **"An Equal world is an Enabled World"**, and suggests that each of us can and must do our bit towards promoting an equal world for all, including gender minorities. Here are some daily opportunities that present themselves:

- ✦ **Try to use inclusive language always, and encourage others to use it too;**
- ✦ **Do not allow any sexist remark, joke or jibe aimed at women/gender minorities to pass without question. Stop it before it becomes acceptable as part of "camaraderie";**
- ✦ **Demand your right to equality in every area of life and ensure that all women are treated equal;**
- ✦ **Whenever an opportunity presents itself, question cultural practices that demean women/gender minorities, put women second to man, or legitimizes violence to women;**
- ✦ **Break down stereotypes to create a level playing field for women in work, education, freedom of movement, dress, and profession;**
- ✦ **Critically examine religious beliefs, taboos, and leadership.**

Jesus has already shown us the way. Pope Francis encourages us. If each of us do our bit to bring about change in our family, workplace, parish community and neighborhoods, we will be contributing to change in the world for all women. Let us Be the change We want to see.

#WomenforChange.





#EachforEqual: Equal Discipleship For an Enabled Church

Jiji Johnson

The idea of equality as brought out rightly in the theme **#EachforEqual** is truly necessary if we need have an enabled world. But the concern is if we can apply this to the Church?

The Church is believed to be the body of Christ and hence demands equal and responsible participation of men and women in all its areas of functioning. To translate this vision to life, Church members irrespective of their gender need to pool in their resources. Christ visualized the reign of God as a reality which has no experiences of inequality. However, the lived experience of the Churches today sees the egalitarian status of women as envisioned by Christ ignored, and gender relations practiced by male members of the family and society continues leading to a situation of women's subordination in the Churches. This can be resolved only through the promotion of justice and awareness of the rights of women in the Church. The Churches must also initiate and sustain, in all creativity and good sense, the promotion of the involvement of women in all aspects of ecclesiastical life, especially in the level of decision making and leadership. The social mission of the Church is to be liberative and transformative. This article is a search into how we can translate the #EachforEqual theme into our ecclesiastical setting that so that an enabled Church becomes a reality.

Soon after the resurrection of Jesus, the early church community used to gather, with one heart and soul and we see the active role of women in various biblical references (Phi:4:2-3, Act:16:13-15, 1cor:16:19, Rom:16:12). The early Church celebrated the Lord's supper and preached good news in the 'house churches'. The Eucharist in this period was celebrated by the whole church as the people brought along food to be shared and broke the Word of God. As noted by Elisabeth Fiorenza, the house churches by virtue of its location, provided equal opportunities for women because traditionally the house was considered women's sphere and women were not excluded from activities in it. They were actively participating in it. (Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza: In memory of her;1988)



How then did the Church become so hierarchical and unequal as it is today? After the declaration of Edict of Milan in 313 by Constantine, Christianity became the official religion and the Church got imperial patronage. The worship places were built by the Empire and the imperial treasury was open for that. Then worship was shifted from the house churches to public worship places. The sitting arrangement in the church and vestments of the clergy resembled a royal set-up. With public recognition of the Church in the fourth century, the clergy found themselves enjoying this status of senior imperial officials including their attire. (Wybrew Hug: The Orthodox liturgy; 1990) Gradually strict hierarchy developed within the worshipping community and women were moved to the lowest level. The church and its surroundings were considered to be holy and the house and its environment were taken to be unholy. This led to a reduction of the self-worth of women. Changes introduced by Christ among the disciples came to be ignored. If the Church is to be enabled, the building of self-esteem among women should become an important mission of the church.

Social scientists usually define the self as the combination of one's physical appearance, memories and sensory images (Gecas 1982). H. Norman Wright presents the basis for a healthy self-image as containing the need to belong, the need to feel worthy and need to feel competent (H. Norman Wright: 1993). Latest studies show that through enhancing the positive emotions, mental health can be regained. In order to provide life in abundance, Jesus enhanced the positive emotions in women to whom He ministered. In contrast, however, we are experiencing a kind of suppression, avoidance and segregation in our ministries.

Both in his teaching and his activities, Jesus reached out to women as persons who were equally worthy as men in his salvific act. Through his non-judgmental attitude and unconditional love, Jesus enhanced a women's self-esteem and helped them to break the barriers that cloistered their freedom. Through his ministry he helped them to change, stretch, grow, have hope, positive energy and faith in themselves. All through the healing ministry of Jesus, women like the bent woman, the bleeding woman, Mary Magdalene and the Samaritan woman were all healed from their distorted physical, mental, religious, social, racial problems and this allowed them to grow fully. Jesus always went out of his way to touch and liberate those who had reached the limit of human endurance. The bleeding woman - an experience that had made her a social outcast for twelve years and the woman whose back was bent for eighteen years were both desperate. Jesus reached out to them, because he knew that these women were important as human beings and needed dignity and respect. Mary Magdalene who was the first to receive news of his resurrection, was given the honoured position of declaring the resurrection to the disciples. Women were validated as worthy of the most privileged service in the community of faith, bearing witness to the reality of the risen Lord Jesus.

To conclude, if the Church has to grow into a community of people who commit themselves to live in communion with God and with each other according to the message of Gospel, then it has to be built on equal discipleship. This we can see in the message of the 'Nazareth Manifesto'(Lk: 4:18,19). The task of building a more enabled Church is unquestionably the task of every human being. Love, freedom, dignity and justice are qualities of an enabled Church that is modeled after the early Church according to vision shared by Christ. For this both women and men need to understand the significance of **#EachforEqual** - that together we build an enabled Church.

Sisters, Resisters and Persisters

Let's take stock and step forward

Anita Cheria



Artist: Dr. Sylvia Karpagam

While history books paint a grand picture of ancient civilizations, scientific discoveries and technological advancements of the human race, something that remains out of syllabus is the widespread practices of marginalization and discrimination of individuals and often large sections of society. The largest section of the marginalised certainly consists of women.

The Report of the UN Secretary-General on Sustainable Development Goals in the section on Goal number 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' mentions *“that in addition to harmful practices like female genital mutilation and early marriage there is insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality, such as legal discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, decision-making on sexual and reproductive issues and low levels of political participation.”*

What this means to us is that almost all women experience some form of violence, exclusion and othering in their lives. While the gender bias against women is near universal, women are not one monolithic group when it comes to the experience of this bias. It takes some additional forms and intensity when it comes to women experiencing multiple vulnerabilities. These differences among us need to be understood, acknowledged and addressed. The stigma and discrimination faced by transwomen is different from that faced by transwomen, which is different from the experiences of indigenous women, which again cannot be equated to the indignity and violence faced by Dalit women. It would be unfair to generalise the experiences of differently abled women with the insecurity of unorganized working women and those from the othering of religious minorities. Our challenge as women would be to empathise and respect each other's experiences and support each other while simultaneously fighting the structured gender-based violence that is common.

The latest National Sample Survey reports on India's female **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** shows a disturbing trend. The share of working-age women who report either being employed or being available for work has fallen to a historic low of **23.3%** in 2017-18, meaning that over three out of four women over the age of 15 in India are neither working nor seeking work.

The number of elected women Members of Parliament (MP) from the most developed state in our country, Kerala, reveals how strong the preference for male leadership is.



In the seven decades post-Independence the voters of Kerala elected on average less than one woman MP out of the twenty parliamentary constituencies in the state each time. In the last election, this place was taken by Remya Haridas, a Dalit, making her only the second Dalit woman to be elected from Kerala to the parliament.

The role of religion and religious institutions in legitimizing and reinforcing a 'second place and at times the last or no place' to women can't be over emphasised. Most churches, temples and mosques today have institutionalised and accepted patriarchy to a lesser or larger extent. Religions which preach a life based on values of love, compassion and justice have become corrupted and replaced by distorted notions of obedience to, and domination by, men. This pattern, which excludes women from positions of spiritual leadership, administrative control, and policy making, remains mostly unchallenged. The bogey of tradition, God and duty is used to enslave and silence women even now.

Kamla Bhasin, noted gender rights activist and writer, said that "capitalism and patriarchy have had a dual relationship because capitalism needs cheap labour and women are the cheapest." I would go a step further to say that the same seems to hold true for social and religious institutions be it the orthodox family or the orthodox church where women 'enjoy a place of honour' as silent working members without a say or share in decisions and resources.

On a positive note, India is currently witnessing a historic outpouring of women and youth in the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and the National Register of Citizens. The question of needing to prove one's identity seems to have struck a chord with women. In India, women have traditionally faced alienation being told as young girls that they don't really belong to their parental home, as they will after marriage belong to their husband's family; the sense of belonging to one's husband's family is more ordered by responsibilities than rights. The protests are bringing together women and youth from diverse class, caste and religious backgrounds to share this space where dissent is expressed in diverse forms from sloganeering to speeches, cartoons, theater, poetry, songs and night vigils. This is leading to multiple conversations, sharing of opinions and experiences and, at times, a meeting of minds. This space for dissent doubles up as a safe space for women listen to new ideas, to forge new friendships among women who were strangers till the protests unfolded to include them. Many, including me, now eagerly wait to join such meetings to meet and make friends and sing songs - to see the young and the old arguing about citizenship, constitutional law, share messages to coordinate meetings, and speak about our children and their dreams and ours.

While across the globe women are reclaiming their voice and agency, there is so much more to do. So, let's make it happen. Let's work towards being **#EachforEqual**.





WE'D BE NOTHING WITHOUT FEMINISM
aka. L Romal M Singh
(Editor-in-Chief, Provoke Lifestyle)

Many years ago, when I was just 16 and still a trainee journalist, I remember being very worried about 'being discovered'. I carried this secret identity around with me always assuming and hoping that no one would know. It was therefore very traumatizing for me when my editor, a woman, suggested that I go cover the first Gay Pride in Bangalore. My first questions were: why me? Why not someone else from the team? Was it because I wore my hair long? Did my editor think I was a transgender person?

My questions were never answered, but there I was on that fateful July afternoon, hiding amid a noisy crowd of journalists, hoping I wouldn't be recognized. I mean, it made no sense, nobody could recognize me...I wasn't even a part of the LGBTQIA+ community yet but what if something gave my identity away? An unconscious hand gesture or a sudden feminine hip sway...I was terrified!

The parade began and the enthusiasm was infectious. At first, I stayed to the corners... then suddenly built the courage to walk into the middle of the parade, and then almost out of nowhere, I found myself at the helm of the parade. It was so liberating. I was free. I was unaware of the world around me and for the first time, I didn't care.

What gave me this courage? What transformed a scared closeted gay boy into a queer fearless champion? It definitely wasn't the other gay men there. Instead, it was the beautiful transgender women and the equally lively queer women who led the parade. I had found home. I had found peace. India's queer movement would have been nothing without the feminists who birthed it. This is a truth many would shy away from acknowledging.

Being the patriarchy that we are, we're so much more comfortable ascribing the success of the queer movement to male latecomers. Easier hero stereotypes. Lawyers and activists all men who stole the movement from the original path breakers.

For anyone who cared to pay attention, the queer movement in India began with the transgender community. Transgender women especially. They were the first to take to the streets across this country and almost all of them will shamelessly tell you that they learned to be so brave and self-aware because of the feminists in their lives. The feminist movement doesn't have one face, but many healthcare and livelihood activists who worked with transgender communities in the early 90s were shameless and proud feminists. They were the ones who taught our trans sisters to be brave.

Our trans sisters taught the rest of us to be brave. And even when, we the LGB joined in, it was the feminists who kept us grounded. It was the feminists who taught us about equality and intersectionality. It was the feminists who taught us about our rights - about what the constitution stood for. It was the feminists who fought against the AFSPA in North-East and the feminists who burn the midnight oil at Shaheen Bagh and Bilal Bagh.

And yet, my foolish community (LGBTQIA+ community) forgets this in the blink of an eye. The new heroes of our movement, none elected by us, are all misogynistic men. Misogynists who did nothing. Misogynists who hid behind feminists as they were rounded-up by the police. Misogynists, who used these feminists as shields, abused them and stole their glory.

But not all of us forget and those of us who were a part of this movement from the beginning know where credit is due. We'd be nowhere were it not for the feminists who created our strong roots.

Misogynists will come and go, but what was set in stone by our founding feminists, stays strong.

Mary Magdalene: #Each for equal!

Rev. Prof. Jayachitra Lalitha

The Chosen, a television drama produced in 2017 created huge waves of impact as the largest crowd funded media project raising over 10 million dollars from more than 16,000 investors. Based on the life story of Jesus Christ, the director Dallas Jenkins portrays the life of Jesus “**through the eyes of those who met him**”. The very first episode is titled, “**I have called you by name**” and tells the story of Jesus through the eyes of Mary Magdalene. A young woman named Lilith struggles through her dysfunctional emotions and behaviours, as her belief in Palestine ruled by the Messiah has not yet materialized. Her sexuality has been violated by the Roman soldiers every now and then which leads to many attempts to end her life. At that critical juncture, Jesus enters the scene and calls her by the name Mary!

Mary from Magdala is a woman from whom Jesus has cast out seven demons (cf. mark 16:9). From today's scholarly perspective what is portrayed as demon possession in Jesus' time is nothing but psychological disorders or illnesses. Luke 8:1-3 includes Mary Magdalene as someone who accompanied Jesus throughout his journey of mission to the Jews and beyond ever since she was healed from her psychological dysfunctions. Hegemonic patriarchal systems coupled with unfathomable toxic stress induced on women in an imperial Rome leads to a tremendous dysfunctionality of her mind!

Mary Magdalene's fate doesn't end in a mental asylum set up by the Romans in Jerusalem! Among the toxic men of her little world, Mary encountered the possibility of a man with redeemed masculinity who could redeem her too! Even today for a female member in church down South, the feeling of being bogged down with constant influx of toxic masculinity of male colleagues and ecclesial leaders is not a strange phenomenon. However, the challenge today for many laity particularly women as well as the clergy is to constantly strive to rise above the negative energies of the patriarchal boundaries which are further intersected with casteism, classism, ageism and similar other unquestioned powers. Identifying men of redeemed masculinities is inevitable in enhancing an empowered environment of functional emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

The United Nations has called for celebrating this year's International Day for working women with the campaign pose for #EachforEqual.



A collective individualism can enhance an equal world as an enabled world. Just as individually we are responsible for our own thoughts and actions, we can also collectively “choose to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations and celebrate women's achievements.”

Collectively, each one of us can help create a gender equal world.

*Let's all be **#EachforEqual**.*

The eight episodes of *The Chosen* have portrayed a new millennial version of Mary Magdalene, who stands out among the disciples as a woman who has truly risen above the unethical practices of patriarchy in the first century CE. It is not a mere coincidence that Mary Magdalene is the first witness of the resurrected Christ and the engineer of the kerygmatic proclamation of the resurrection power. The inherent potential to break the shackles of patriarchy is within every woman, man and child! However, the challenge Mary Magdalene continues to pose is: have you encountered the resurrection power of the redeemed masculinity of Christ? Have you embodied the enabling power of Christ for an equal world?

*Lets commit **#EachforEqual**!*

**“We don't have a choice on whether we DO social media,
The question is how well we DO it.”**

- *Erik Qualman*

In the second edition of the newsletter, we introduce the National Team for ICWM Social Media. The 5 member team in addition to arranging the quarterly newsletter is also robustly involved in updating the website <https://www.icwmindia.org/>, the facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Indian-Christian-womens-movement-ICWM-566064857083601/> and twitter http://www.twitter.com/icwm_india page as well as issuing statements as and when necessary. And so, let's meet the team:



Jerin Jacob is a **social entrepreneur, educator, researcher and trainer**. She has been involved with ICWM's Social Media team since October 2019 and giving it her best. She looks forward to using her expertise in designing to contribute towards the growth and upscaling of the virtual outreach unit of ICWM in any capacity possible.



Seena is the **Director of Green I Solutions**, Cochin, working towards Websites Development and Graphic Designing. She joined the ICWM media team in November 2019 with her creative expertise in technology. She looks forward to designing the newsletters and enhancing the ICWM website to be more attractive, user-friendly and responsive to all.



Rachael Alphonso is a **PhD Scholar, researcher and Nutritionist**. She has been the past president of ICYM, Archdiocese of Bombay and was considered as a Youth Icon by Examiner in 2011. She co-initiated the ICWM-media team in June 2018 with Virginia Saldanha. Since then, she has assisted in designing and editing the current website as well as creating the ICWM Twitter as well as FB handle. The website is dedicatedly updated with the regional reports, updates and Press Release/Statements. She holds an expertise in technical know-how and is thorough in keeping up with the global trends for social media, creating awareness by making and sharing posters and memes. The 21st century is the age of the internet and social media. It is a vital tool in promoting action and awareness. However, she affirms that social media is NOT an alternative to ground-level activism.



Marcia comes with an experience of 20 years in the field of Advertising as a **Creative Writer and Copy Head**. This, however, was little preparation for the Social Media Team, especially as channels of communication are changing by the nanosecond. But it was the reason she co-opted into the team around October 2018. She has worked on a few campaign ideas guided by both Rachael & Virginia and spearheads this newsletter. She looks forward to helping ICWM members access the existing Social Media platforms - the webpage, facebook page and Twitter handle, thus increasing the traffic and our social media presence. She hopes to connect members across states through regular updates via email and the Newsletter. Above all else, her effort lies in ensuring that the Social Media Team works seamlessly with the National Team to take forward the vision and mission of the ICWM.



Virginia Saldanha is the founder **Member of ICWM**. As Executive Secretary, together with the National Team she helped set up the first website for ICWM at Wordpress.com and maintained it until ICWM had funds enough to buy a domain name. Was Executive Secretary for the Archdiocese of Bombay, CBCI and FABC Women's Desk/Commission, and brought out quarterly newsletters for the latter two. A writer and editor, Virginia has also held roles as a web coordinator for Ecclesia of Women in Asia, and worked on the website of Catherine of Siena Virtual College for preparing lessons and archiving virtual classroom discussions, and in general running the communications, registrations and certifications of the virtual college. She further continues her work with secular women's groups for creating awareness and for women's rights. She is glad to contribute her expertise and from her vast experience in communications and writing to the ICWM newsletter



Shefalle is an **independent catechist** and always been at the forefront of social issues in word and action since an early age. She has contributed to many social awareness posters and helped the core team in online membership of ICWM Mumbai team. As a part of the National Social Media Team, she hopes to assist the team with her creative skills.

The whole ICWM team is also grateful to *Fr. Cleo SDB and the Catholic Communication Centre of the Archdiocese of Bombay who guided the transition of the website from wordpress to own domain and trained Rachael and Virginia in updating the website. The CCC continues to maintain the website for us.*

Musings Unleashed..

Magnificent Woman

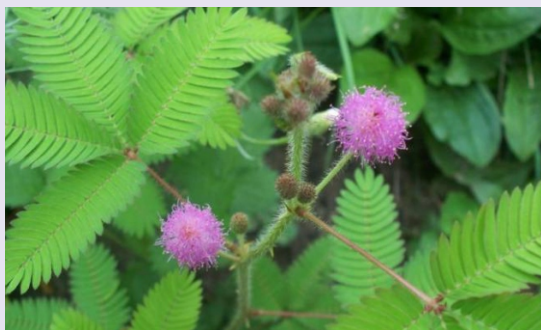
Eleanor D'Cruz Sherring



Your face isn't meant to be slapped
 And your hair isn't meant to be yanked
 Your eye isn't meant to be blackened
 And your back isn't meant to be kicked
 If you think you're keeping the peace by hiding your pain
 If you think you're saving your marriage you're trying in vain
 Coz the covenant was broken long before he lifted a finger
 It broke when he thought you were his toy to disfigure.

Touch-Me-Not

-Jerin Jacob



A She within she, she bore...
 Darkness gripped her innermost being,
 A fear she feared for another She,
 her own Image.
 In She, she saw a little she; Sleep
 Was hereon to elude her deep...
 The little swing she wanted to push higher,
 Ensuring She's feet never touched the dark mortal earth.
 Those stone chills that ran down her spine;
 Awoke
 In her an old Me.

NATIONAL TEAM MEETING

The National Team met at Church Mission House, Grant Road, Mumbai, between 15th & 16th February, 2020. The Meeting (Board & Lodging) was hosted by CNI Bishop Prakash Patole, on the request of ICWM member Sushma Ramswami. Being the first meeting, it was a time to get to know each other and establish a working relationship. Group sharings brought out the spontaneity and warmth of each person, as they reached out to know, to understand and connect with each other. In addition to a review of the 2nd National Convention and addressing the issues therein, one of the most urgent concerns is looking for funding for forthcoming programs. The work done to date was also discussed with a view to making our work more effective. We used the time to meet members of the Social Media Team to understand how we can work better together seamlessly. One of the highlights of the meet was a late night but very memorable visit to the women at Mumbai Bagh. The people were touched by the visit of Indian Christian women from as far as Mizoram, Chennai, Bangalore and Kerala. Among the many plans for the next year, the first to roll out is a National program scheduled for the 1st week of April, 2020. YOU ARE PART OF ME. Details are spelled out in the article to follow. Please make a note of how you can implement it in your own circles, local areas. Invite the Press and let us make a statement of solidarity, while standing up for our constitution and the values of our faith.





You are Part of Me!
 “Unless I wash your feet, you can
 Have no part with me” (John 13: Vs 8)

In the present political climate that is divisive and discriminatory in nature, the Indian Christian Women's Movement makes a counter move that is unifying and inclusive. We affirm the bonding of all people as children of one God and citizens who have equal rights in this great country.

As a gesture that gives expression to this inclusive vision, we invite ICWM members to conduct the foot-washing ritual this year, mainly with our Muslim sisters and brothers in our local units. This simple act of humble service can be a gesture of acceptance and above all a powerful declaration of inclusion and solidarity.

We draw inspiration for this event from Jesus Christ (John 13: 1-17), who in washing his disciples' feet, subverted the social hierarchies of his times and gave the community a new meaning of inclusion and belonging. When Peter as a disciple, refused to allow Jesus, his master to wash his feet, Jesus firmly stated, **“Unless I wash your feet, you can have no part with me” (Jn 13: 8)** and he invited his followers to do likewise. In today's context of heightened religious nationalism that is exclusive and divisive, we want to translate to life the inclusive and unifying message of Jesus by washing the feet of our Muslim brothers and sisters because we want to declare in a loud and clear voice that they are part of us! India's secular and democratic texture is under fire through the promulgation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) on 12 December 2019.

The exclusion of Muslims in the CAA is the first instance of religion being used overtly as a criterion for citizenship and so, this gives expression to the 'divide and rule' strategy of a nationalistic government. This move risks tearing the country apart by destroying the basic tenets of the Indian Constitution **that declares that India is a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic.**

The Christian Tradition

'Washing of the feet' is a revered Christian tradition, rich in meaning and symbolism. Biblically, it is found only in John's Gospel and John gives it a deep theological meaning in making this narration a key for understanding the significance of the Eucharist. Christians generally partake in the foot-washing ritual in their churches, and it is most widely known to be held as a feature of the Maundy Thursday service. It exists in all major Christian denominations the Orthodox, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, and in all major Protestant denominations. Traditionally women were excluded from this ritual since the priest generally washed the feet of boys and men as a symbolic enactment of Jesus washing his disciples feet at the last supper, though of late in some churches attempts are made to include a few women and people from other marginalized sections. Even as 'washing of the feet' is customarily held in the churches as an important element in the commemoration of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, confining the celebration of this ritual only to the churches limits its meaning and the implications it has for initiating a new social order with right human relationships. For us Christian women in India today, who are living in a society that is deeply marked by social hierarchies and the religious divide, it is an occasion to bring out the social and liberative significance of this ritual. In doing so, we assert our commitment to heal the wounds of division with acts of solidarity and love.



Setting the ambience for the ritual

- Where we conduct this ritual: It is important to gather the people in an open space or a hall. Since we are taking the gospel significance of this ritual to the social space, it may be good to organize it in a common hall or public space where all can comfortably gather. It may be better not to conduct it in the church.
- Have sufficient chairs arranged according to the number of people participating in the ritual, better in two rows facing each other with adequate space in between the rows for the foot-washing.
- Keep buckets and mugs or jars with water for washing basins for pouring the water while washing and towels for wiping the feet, all ready at the beginning of each row.
- Begin the programme only after all the people whose feet will be washed are seated and ready. Have a banner at the backdrop with the theme '**You are part of me**' and create an ambience that is welcoming and inviting with some background music on.
- Have some snacks/sweets ready to share with people after the foot washing is over so that it becomes an agape meal in keeping with the table fellowship of Jesus.

Outline of the Ritual

- ✦ Welcome and Introduction (In the introduction, explain to the people why we are conducting such a ritual in the public space in the present context of India today which is being divided in the name of religion, caste, class and gender. We as Christian women would like to follow Jesus our model to build the unity of all people as one family of God's children. Invite the people to enter into the sacredness of this space and time with a sense of reverence and in silence)
- ✦ Opening Song/Hymn (something to the effect that we are all children of the same God, brothers and sisters, we are one human family without hierarchical divisions and the like. It can even be movie songs that communicate the message of unity or it can be bhajan /chant in which all the people can join)
- ✦ 1st Reading: Can be from a secular text or a scripture according to the group with whom you are celebrating this ritual. See that the reading gives the message of love, unity, brotherhood/sisterhood, justice, equality, and the like. It can be 1 Cor 13 on love. When doing with a Muslim group, you could take an appropriate text from Quran (after consulting them) and get one of them to read it. Or it could be even a poem that conveys the message of unity and peace.
- ✦ A song/hymn in response to the reading which is again on love and unity.



- 2nd Reading: The Gospel Text John 13: 1-8, 12-15
- Breaking the Word/ Homily. This could be given by one person from the ICWM team, in which you share the significance of this ritual for our lives today in the light of this word of God. What did Jesus mean by washing his disciples feet in his time and what is the meaning of this text for today's India. Emphasize the significance of the theme 'You are part of me', relating it to the divisive religious nationalism and related politics in our country today that defines citizenship in religious terms. And also share the implications of this ritual for family life and relationships in the neighbourhood, work place etc.
- The Washing of the Feet. (This is done very solemnly with two or more people washing from either side). Sing songs/ or hymns on love, self-giving, humble service that brings life to others in abundance. You can even play some good music.
- Once the washing is over you could, invite someone from the group whose feet have been washed to share their experience of what they felt while participating this ritual and how they see the meaning of this ritual for our everyday lives.



- End the ritual with pledge of unity, where each one repeats the pledge expressing one's commitment to serve one another in humility and love and to build unity. This could be concluded with a song affirming unity, brotherhood/sisterhood. We could do this standing in a circle, joining hands and at the end wish each other with a sign of peace. It could be a namaste, hand shake or even a hug as it seems appropriate.
- And conclude after sharing some sweets or snacks as an expression of joy and fellowship.

Note:

- ✦ Since we are planning to do this ritual in different places, what is given is just a tentative outline. It can be changed or adapted according to the specific needs of each place. There could be many such centres in a city or just one centrally planned event.
- ✦ The event could be planned at the start of the Holy Week, between Sunday 5th and Wednesday 8th April, 2020.
- ✦ As we want to make it a public witness of the liberative significance of the foot-washing ritual and also of our stance of being in solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters, it will be good to give media coverage to the event. So make it a point to invite local media, mainly reporters from leading newspapers and get the proceedings covered. ICWM national can provide a basic sketch of a Press Release which you can adapt to suit your own event.

· This event is an ICWM initiative, but it can be conducted in collaboration with other organizations or people of goodwill who share ICWM's feminist and liberative vision. It will be good also to choose a partner from the Muslim community to assist, wherever it is possible.

· The National Team can also provide a Banner Design that you can print and display.

ICWM BANGALORE NEWS

ICWM Bangalore has been at the forefront of a number of the protests here in Bangalore. Included among these are the 45-km long city-wide human chain that happened at St. John's Church Road/Coles Park on 30th Jan, the day on which Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. Infact, we decided to attend the protest as part of our planned ICWM meeting for January. Francoise, Rini, Brinda, Anita Cheria and Cynthia Stephen were there along with other friends at various times. We sang Abide with me - one of Gandhi's favourite hymns, and of course joined in the national anthem at 5.17 as was the plan.

BANGALORE Prof. Rini Ralte, Ms. Cynthia Stephen, Ms. Anita Cheriya and Rev. Jayachitra Lalitha join an Inter-Faith Solidarity meet at Bilal Bagh Muslim Womxn's (Womxn includes TransGenders) Protest on 27th Feb 2020.



ETI BACHAO, DESH BACHAO - (A protest at Jantar Mantar)

On 14th December, Delhi ICWM held a protest at Jantar Mantar against rape and security issues of women at large. We were glad to have the active support of NCCI and other churches of Delhi. Many women leaders who are working for women were also present. Although the Delhi atmosphere was very hostile for the protesters, ICWM members came out bravely and raised their voice against sexual crimes against women. The protest had a wide mediacoverage and many Church leaders appreciated the initiative of ICWM. The Nirbhaya and Unnao case was touched upon as well. However, we regret not meeting Unnao rape victim and assuring her of our support.



Mumbai News

A meeting to discuss the way forward following the Ayodhya judgment was held on 14th December 2019 at 4pm at YWCA, Mumbai Central. The meeting was called by those attempting a solidarity network of Christian, Muslim, Dalit, Adivasi and women in Maharashtra.

Many are grappling with the unfairness of the judgment. Some progressives, a 100 Muslims across India including scholars, activists, journalists, businessmen, poet, actors put out a statement on why they do not want a review. Many progressive non Muslims felt that a review might give the BJP an agenda for the next election and its best to let things be.

48 academics led by Harsh Mander have filed a review petition because the unjust verdict needs to be challenged since the verdict treated the Ramjanbhoomi- Babri Masjid case as a dispute between the Hindus and Muslims in India and along with it SC used differential standards of proof for both parties.

Mihir Desai spoke about the judgment, Shakil Ahmed spoke on reasons for wanting a review, Brinelle D'Souza from Indian Christian Women's Movement- Mumbai shared her views, Javed Anand spoke against the filing of review petition, Haisna Khan presented the position of feminist women. This was followed by a discussion. While the time period allowed for a review is 30 days from the day of the judgment, an application for condoning the time lapse is often allowed. ICWM members Brinelle D'Souza and Marcia D'Cunha with several other Women's groups, met with Mr Sharad Pawar to discuss women's concerns on CAA/NPR and its implementation.

Dr Joycia Thorat represented ICWM Mumbai at a Press Meet called by Women, Queer persons, Trans Community Organisations and Child Rights Groups appealing to the Maharashtra Government not to implement NPR/NRC/CAA in the state.



CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE DELHI

On 20th January, with the support from SPOWAC (an NGO), Delhi ICWM arranged a campaign on Safe Delhi for women from womb to tomb at Dwarka sector 1. 30 women from Dwarka area participated despite the rains and severe cold. Dr Anu shared about the gender inequality in our society that acted as the main reason behind all kinds of violence against women. She elaborated on ways in which women in family can work towards its eradication via proper education and bringing up children the right way. She encouraged people to fight against any unjust practice and stressed the need for women empowerment in addition to women being mentally and physically strong.

There was also a panel discussion on acid attack done with the Delhi High Court Advocates and Mrs. Laxmi Krishnan of SPOWAC. It was nice to see the women coming out openly in support with a desire to be heard. It was nice to see the women coming out openly in support with a desire to be heard

DELHI From Ground Zero at Jantar the Delhi ICWM team joined the Citizen's Sit-In for peace on 26th Feb 2020, during the Delhi riots.



A Celebration for Success and Failure

A get-together was organised by Delhi ICWM on 24th January at CNI Bhavan, 16 Pant Marg, Delhi to celebrate the journey of the movement. The celebration commenced with a prayer by Ms. Savita and Dr. Anu shared the beautiful vision and objectives of ICWM with the new members. Members appreciated the initiative of ICWM for holding a protest at Jantar Mantar, the work to end acid attacks on women and a campaign for safe Delhi for women from womb to tomb. Ms Sushma delivered an impactful speech on the same and members shared their life experiences with each other with great enthusiasm. Further, it was a fun-filled afternoon with lots of games, prizes, hot samosa , sandwiches and doughnuts. The celebration ended with a promise of more activities and active participation by the new members.



Kerala ICWM and Kottayam YWCA join hands to discuss 'Women and Mental Health'

The **Kerala chapter of ICWM** in collaboration with **YWCA Kottayam** conducted a one day workshop on *Women and Mental Health* for its members at **YWCA, Kottayam, on 11th January 2020**.

46 women from different walks of life participated in the program. After a meaningful prayer service by ICWM members Ms. Anju and Dr. Susan, Mrs. Mary Suku, President YWCA Kottayam welcomed the gathering and appreciated ICWM as a national movement that is committed to the cause of women. She expressed the desire for greater collaboration between ICWM and YWCA in the future.

The resource persons of the day were all core-team members of ICWM, Kerala. **Dr. Kochurani Abraham**, the regional convenor, on introducing the topic highlighted the significance of women taking time and space for their own wellbeing and focused on the question of women's mental health putting it under the broader caption *Women's Lives Matter*, which has been the slogan of ICWM in initiating the Kerala unit. Another core-team member Mrs. Jiji Johnson, who is a psychologist and counsellor, discussed the topic from a psychological perspective, and pointed to the impact of a distorted understanding of sexuality and spirituality on women's wellbeing. She introduced the scope of positive psychology practiced by many people today as a means of dealing with the issue of women's mental health.

Prof. Shanthi Mathai, the secretary of **ICWM Kerala** based her reflections Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and its applications to women's lives. The participants deliberated on the theme in groups and identified the concerns relating to mental health in their day to day lives and the measures they need to take in order to address them. This exercise facilitated sharing of life experiences with greater openness and trust among the women. Reflecting on the observations and comments from the groups, Sr. Jessina SRA, another core-group member, highlighted the importance of self awareness about stressful situations that women undergo and the ways of dealing with them positively in order to care for one's mental health and wellbeing. The program ended on a positive note with greater interest for collaboration on the part of YWCA and ICWM Kerala.



Mizoram News

Mizoram regional unit had a meeting on 21st Feb, to discuss the program for International Women's Day and Washing of the feet.



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This second edition of When Women Wake is led by the South Region in India and revolves around the International Women's Day theme **#EachforEqual**. The combination of colours Purple White & Green on our Masthead in this issue represent all we stand for. Purple is the internationally recognized color to symbolize women. White signifies our universal preference for peace vis a vis war. Green represents our choice for Mother Earth and Nature, women being the first victims of environmental degradation.

The combination of colours, has a rich history going back to the Suffragette movement of the 1920s.

