



## The Women's Initiative: An Important Voice in Catholic Church Reform

*Presented at VOTF National Meeting June 10, 2011*

### **Background**

At a critical time in the history of the Catholic Church, a new coalition of women and men have joined together to form the “Women’s Initiative.” We want our voices to be heard as we help to reform and transform our church to meet the needs of the 21st century. We want women—and all the baptized—to be empowered in the future Catholic Church.

Voice of the Faithful provides the platform for Universal Church Reform (UCR), and the Women’s Initiative (WI) is a part of that plan. Members of this initiative bring energy, ideas, imagination and steadfast commitment to shaping our church for the 21st century. We believe that it is time for all baptized Catholics to be actively involved in the process.

As Catholic women and men, we are motivated by Jesus’ call to all the baptized to fully use and share the gifts we enjoy as Catholics to publicly address church governance and structure in order to shape a fair, equal and inclusive church for all—for women as well as men.

Members of Women’s Initiative are dedicated to creating an ongoing dialogue with all Catholics who value the contributions women have made to the church since its inception. We look forward to a renewed church that welcomes all women as collegial partners and leaders in the effort to shape the church of the future. The Women’s Initiative will...

- Present and refute situations and laws that marginalize and eclipse women in scripture, tradition and spirituality;
- Dialogue with all Catholics about issues of deep importance to women;
- Educate and evangelize all Catholics about women’s spirituality and recognize their contributions for reforming the universal church; and
- Work collaboratively with organizations and groups that have similar goals.

So what is the focus and work of the Women’s Initiative?

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## ***Organization of Women's Initiative Team***

The volunteers in this group are currently organizing in sub groups that will include: Prayers / Feminine Spirituality; Historians; Connectors; Writers; Educators; and Organizers.

### ***Current Status of the WI Work:***

In pursuing our goal to create an ongoing dialogue with all Catholics about issues of deep importance to women, the WI is developing the following webpage content on the VOTF website:

- An online “forum”- the “Virtual Table” envisioned as a place to dialogue about the role of Women in the Church.
- A repository of references, articles, and scriptural references that serve as resources to the focus of this group.
- An Activities and Events section that promotes local gatherings, workshops, lectures, and presentations

A White Paper is currently being written to educate and evangelize Catholics about women's spirituality, their place in Scripture and Tradition, and women's contributions to universal church reform. Sections of this White Paper include:

- The Scriptural, Historical and Theological basis for evaluating the current status of women in Church leadership.
- Discussion of a female diaconate with the purpose of ensuring a future church of inclusion, equality, and grace that cooperates with God's saving action.

### ***The Women's Initiative seeks equality for all baptized Catholics:***

- To determine church leadership.
- To develop inclusive ministries for all who are called.
- To dialogue about all issues of importance to women.
- To encourage structural change focused on faith-needs for all Catholics in the 21st century.

**Please sign up to volunteer your time and expertise with the Women's Initiative.**

***We are committed to using our voice, our time and our energy to: “Keep the Faith, Change the Church.” We are dedicated to working “Toward Shaping Our Church for the 21st Century.”***