**Review of ‘Awakening: Catholic Women’s Ordination from the Public Square’**

**by Myra Poole and Pippa Bonner**

‘Awakening’ is the story of the organisation ‘Catholic Women’s Ordination’ which has now been in existence for 28 years.

The seed of CWO’s creation was sown on November 11th, 1992 when the Church of England voted in favour of women priests. In the ensuing public celebrations, a young woman appeared with a poster proclaiming: ‘Roman Catholic Women Next!’ This was later pushed through the letter box of Cardinal Hume, then Archbishop of Westminster, an act which became the first of many protests characterising the work of CWO. The group was officially launched on 24th March 1993 and it has campaigned ever since for a re-examination of the whole idea of priesthood and for the ordination of women in a reformed Catholic church.

At the heart of this book is the belief that change needs to occur through a process of awakening and reform. Awakening, for Poole and Bonner, is about achieving a change of consciousness through awareness, healing and spiritual growth. Consequently, the subject of every chapter is examined in this context. Renewal is seen as the only way women’s ordained ministry can be brought fully into the church, not just added on to the flawed system which already exists.

The authors have divided the book into two halves. The first describes the process of awakening as it was experienced by CWO members: when they protested publicly and encountered hostility and threat, and then as they tried to deal with their feelings of loss and grief as they worked for change and renewal; finally, as they realised their need for spiritual growth to achieve the strength required to challenge authorities and institutions over long periods of time.

The second half examines the origins of misogyny in the Catholic Church, a misogyny which has treated women as inferior to men throughout the centuries and which has kept them so far removed from its institutions and structures as to render them infantile in the role they play. It also explains why women will need to use more than just a claim to equality with men if they are to dislodge the church’s current teaching on ordination. It concludes with contributions from CWO members describing their aspirations for a newly reformed church.

Each chapter ends with pointers to assist personal reflection, and a bibliography of relevant reading material.

This is an informative, thought-provoking read which sheds a bright light on the central issues of the debate for women Catholic priests.

**Kerry Poole**