Dr. Ally Kateusz centered her talk about early Christian women at the altar on her recently published chapter in a fabulous new Oxford University Press book, *Patterns of Women's Leadership in Early Christianity,*edited by Joan Taylor. Dr. Kateusz's chapter in this book is about women bishops in and around the city of Rome, and one of the important artefacts that she analyses was chosen for the book's cover -- an ivory carving of a man and a woman performing the eucharist at the altar table in Old Saint Peter's Basilica.

This carving on a beautiful ivory box survived only because it was buried early in the Christian era, beneath the altar of a Roman era church near Pola in Croatia. It was dug up in 1906, and instantly recognized as extremely important because it preserved the very oldest depiction of a liturgy in a church. Remarkably, it portrays three men and three women, with the men on the left of the altar and the women on the right. Two of the men and two of the women have their arms raised, while the central man and woman face the altar table on each side.

There has never been any controversy that the ivory sculptor carved three women and three men in this church sanctuary, and for over forty years there also was no controversy that the man and woman in the center were flanking an altar. However, art historians soon noticed that the six beautiful spiral columns comprising the ciborium over its altar area looked very much like the famous six spiral columns that Constantine reputedly donated to Old Saint Peter's Basilica for its altar area, columns still preserved in the galleries of the modern Saint Peter's Basilica. This carving, the oldest surviving art of Christians at a church altar, portrays the liturgy as it was originally seen in the most important church in the Catholic world.

Note from Q&A

She was asked her response to those who claim that women may have been ministers in the early church but that doesn't mean we have to have them now, the Church has moved on (can't remember the exact words):

Her response was " The current situation is anti-Jesus. It's anti Christ. It is anti-Christian"