

# **Just Catholic: The Future is Now**

## **A Conversation with Dr Phyllis Zagano and Frank Brennan, SJ AO**

Edited Chat Transcription

9 December 2021 ADST

The following includes extracts of the chat questions and comments arising from our Just Catholic Launch – A Conversation with Dr Phyllis Zagano and Frank Brennan, SJ AO

When: 9 December 2021 AEDT and 8 December 2021 New York

- Names have been modified for privacy/de-identification.
- Some comments removed as they were of more administrative or zoom using related matters!

Thanks to the over 800 registrants for this session, and your ongoing support of Garratt Publishing and our authors.

*Just Catholic: The Future is Now* can be purchased here:

<https://garrattpublishing.com.au/product/9781922484185/>

*Women Icons of Christ*, another Phyllis Zagano title referenced during this session, may be purchased here:

<https://garrattpublishing.com.au/product/9780809155002/>

For more of Phyllis Zagano titles, see

<https://garrattpublishing.com.au/category/phyllis-zagano/>

To explore titles from Fr Frank Brennan, see:

<https://garrattpublishing.com.au/category/frank-brennan/>

Alternatively, please visit your local bookstore and ask for titles from Phyllis and Frank.

Extract/Edited Comments, over page...

**Edited Comments/questions from Just Catholic: The Future is Now event – A Conversation A with Dr Phyllis Zagano and Frank Brennan, SJ AO.**

From Tony:

"Christ in all people" yes, yes yes!!

From Elizabeth:

Thank you so much, Phyllis, for all your wonderful research and writing! We have started a group 'Australian Catholics Exploring the Diaconate', which explicitly includes the conversation on women in the diaconate. What suggestions do you have for moving this conversation forward in Australia?

From Doug & Kath:

If "teaching and preaching" are the way forward for our leadership, we need to reassess the "what" and "how". How do you see it now? The weaknesses? The strengths?

From Corrie:

Is the abortion debate in the US isolated from reverence of all life, e.g. the mass shootings that happen so regularly, the racism and poverty that bring death to many, closing borders to refugees... Issues that happen in Australia and other countries too.

From Loretta:

Should public funding be more for the support of the women who is going through the psychological physical financial circumstances etc. in having the baby, not let totally to the responsibility of the women.

From Geoff:

Phyllis, would you support the conscience of those who choose to use contraception, enter same-sex marriage, or in a stressful situation feel in conscience that they could have an abortion?

From Clive:

Phyllis and Frank do you see a clear way forward for the Church that we can follow?

From Suzanna:

Is there any possibility that the Church's teaching regarding the fertilized ovum as a person is impossible to justify? There is a big difference in believing doctrines and believing teachings that have a scientific basis. (NB Astronomy) Especially as the Church doesn't allow contraception, even though many Catholic couples actually use it.

From Lita:

Look at the age group that are participating here. We will all be dead in 5, 10, 15 years. Where are the young people, how are they getting on board with the changes needed for the church?

From Tony:

Are we mentoring a new generation of those who share our vision of the Church?

From Elizabeth:

For Australian Catholics Exploring the Diaconate: <https://liturgyonthemargins.org/>

From Laurie:

Would not permitting women to assume Deacon status result in even more intense demands by activist women for elevation to the priesthood.

From Peter:

Phyllis, I accept as unarguable that women should be treated as equal in both ministry and governance. Your work on women deacons is extraordinarily valuable and I guess a pragmatic approach to progressively achieving real equality. But is there a danger that a focus on women in the diaconate excuses inaction on the imperative of ordination as priests?

From Marna:

We are not the same, but we are the 'ying and yang' of humanity and should be recognised as that.

From Pat:

Phyllis, would you clarify your understanding of social justice please?

From Margaret:

Phyllis, have you heard anything about the progress (or not) of the current Commission on Women Deacons? As the report from the previous commission of which you were a member has not been published, can you share with us your experience. Many thanks for this conversation and your prophetic voice.

From Silvio:

I suppose the younger ones are presently at work. Maybe at the moment we are called to "hold the fort". Till the time comes when others take over.

From Mary:

Frank, there is a strengthening movement towards women deacons. in Australia.

From Mary:

Would allowing priests to marry improve the attitudes of the Church to women's ordained ministry?

From Peter:

Phyllis ... Would you say something about your views on institutional clericalism in the institutional Catholic Church.

From Colin:

How did the hierarchical church move so far from the example of Jesus who treated women with such respect and honor?

From ?:

It seems that Pope Francis' reinstatement of the ministries of Lector and Acolyte has not had any traction at all in Australia.

From Sophy:

Phyllis, I had the privilege of attending your wonderful address on women deacons when you visited Australia. Do you think that part of the resistance to the idea of the ministry of women deacons might be fear on the part of some sections of the clergy? In addition, how much do you think that many clergy really understand what their own priesthood entails and how the ministry of deacons is different but complementary?

From Maggie:

Where is Christ in all this talk about levels and roles in the Church?? It all seems so far from the simplicity of Christ's teaching!

From Lita:

The Anglican church copes with women priests and bishops. Maybe we need to learn from them

From Maggie:

... and the Uniting Church...

From Waldemar:

Phyllis, there is area for women work more strongly late term abortion hope that you know Gianna Jessen - survivor of abortion, movie "October baby" is made about her. she speaks all around, world against it She was in Australia but she was asking men to act in this area because her experience told her that women are not involve (at least) in this.!! I really would like to talk to you in some way (Skype) and give you a number of areas that women can and should act just now without waiting for progress in participation. Church is all of us so you can play leading role already if you really want.

From Andrew:

It's a very sad testimony on the Church that the male hierarchy still can't see women as the 'icons of Christ' . There is nothing I read in the Gospels that says Jesus took the exclusionary attitude to women that the Catholic male hierarchy takes. Never mind talking about women deacons! The Church needs to get on board with women priests like other churches. Otherwise, the exodus of the Faithful from the Church will continue. Please comment.

From Michael:

Phyllis & Frank, When I read Laudato Si I'm struck that +Francis seems to move so categorically away from a theology of anthropocentrism. Does this suggest to you that he is moving to a position in which Gender diminishes in importance and is replaced by other sacralising factors such as the interconnectedness of all Creation? Is there a sacralisation of the world that moves beyond gender, and which shows just how lagging behind we are in the male dominated Church that we currently inhabit? Doesn't this show up the 'misfit'?

From Peter:

I am horrified but not surprised that you don't know what went forward to the Pope concerning the work on female deacons that you undertook. Would you agree that this is a very unhealthy level of secrecy and unaccountability endemic in the Church's governance and a major priority for reform?

From Garry:

We are a Church that believes in the soul. The body is simply a vehicle for the soul. The soul does not have a gender. The human gender is essential for the continuation of the human race. At the spiritual level there is no distinction between male and female.

From Peter:

Thank you, Phyllis and Frank ... the movement for reform is on good hands.

From Flo:

Re deacons - accredited male and female Pastoral Associates have been employed as co-leaders in parishes but now they are being replaced by lower paid parish workers (not required to meet accreditation standards) and unpaid deacons. Isn't the greater issue one of finance and roles and training for these roles - the question of gender equality for deacons is a concurrent issue.

From Bronwyn:

Thank you all for the discussion - feel more happy in realising that there at least a hunger for change!

From Peter:

Thank you, David and the team at Garrett Publishing ... another triumph! Your leadership in this area will bring its own rewards.

From Anne:

Thank you for arranging this session. Apologies as I need to leave.

From Angelina:

Discerningdeacons.org has many resources for women seeking information

From Garry:

Re my comment above re no distinction between male and female at the spiritual level, we do need to recognise that many women do have a deeper spiritual life, when men are focused on power and control,

From D:

I agree with you Peter - the level of secrecy and unaccountability has been and seems to remain in a very unhealthy level. Fear seems to pervade....and we keep talking about faith in our sermons.

From Maggie:

Thank you everyone

From Trish:

Where there is an imbalance of power there are great social issues and abuse. It happens in politics; it happens in the church....

Maria: Thank you David, Phyllis and Frank for an informative and thought-provoking session.

From Trish:

Frustratingly we are STILL having this conversation in 2021????

From Lucy:

Thank you for a fascinating chat.

From Suzanna:

Thank you, team!

From Tony:

Thanks for this production and the opportunity to hear Phyllis and Frank.

From Corrie

Thank you, Phyllis, Frank and especially David and Garratt's for a stimulating conversation

From Peter and Carmel:

Thank you to Phyllis, Frank, and David and Garratt's for an inspiring discussion.

From Garry:

Thank you all.

From Sophy:

Thanks Phyllis, Frank, and Garratt!