



MEDIA RELEASE

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Three years of Australian women preaching

“Having a woman’s perspective is such a game changer for me, as is just hearing a woman preach.”
Trish Kelly, listener.

On International Women’s Day, 8 March 2024, the podcast **Australian Women Preach** will celebrate three years of production and three years of raising women’s voices in preaching the Gospel.

The weekly podcast features women from a rich diversity of backgrounds, cultures, theological perspectives and denominations preaching on the Gospel passage scheduled for each Sunday.

With a vision for a church that is welcoming, inclusive and diverse, **Australian Women Preach** aims to provide a space where women’s voices, experiences and insights are valued.

An initiative of WATAC (Women and the Australian Church) and the Grail in Australia, the podcast now has 157 episodes of preaching aligned to a full three-year cycle of the Catholic Lectionary. Since it began, it has had more than 36,000 plays and gained over 450 followers.

The concept of creating a podcast came about when two friends, Patricia Gemmell and Dr Tracy McEwan, shared a simple idea inspired by the desire for a more inclusive church, particularly in the Catholic tradition where church law forbids women to preach during Mass. With the support of WATAC and the Grail, and a committed group of like-minded women, the podcast emerged.

“When Australian Women Preach launched on International Women’s Day in 2021, its purpose was to model a form of preaching rarely countenanced in Catholic liturgies,” says Patricia.

“We had been heartened by the discernment of the Australian Catholic Church’s Plenary Council that had proposed allowing the practice of lay preaching.”

“We decided to bring to the public square the broad diversity of Australian women’s voices in breaking open the Word of God and the results speak for themselves.”

“Three years later we are still here. The podcast continues to provide a space for women to use their Spirit-given gifts to reflect on and illuminate scripture.”

One of the defining features of the podcast is the diversity of preachers. In the past three years, the podcast has included theologians, pastors, ordained ministers, teachers, religious sisters, school students, non-binary folk and women of other faiths.

Tracy says the podcast is intentionally ecumenical, showcasing the rich diversity of talent across the whole of the Australian church.





“For some women this is the first time they have ever been given an opportunity to preach, for others they preach every Sunday in their own congregation or community. Others are highly trained theologians or teachers of male clergy, yet they themselves cannot preach,” Tracy says.

“We wanted to show what is possible when you allow women to preach and share the rich gifts women bring to the table.”

Listener Trish Kelly, quoted above, reflects the feeling for many that the podcast has filled a void and created hope in what’s possible when women’s voices are heard.

“The birth of this podcast is so very valued by me and others I know,” she says. “Having such learned, experienced and often downright practical women and girls give a reflection about the Gospels provides such an insight.”

A number of preachers also expressed their gratitude for the podcast. Dr Trish Hindmarsh comments, “Australian Women Preach models the future. It is positive proof of the gifts of women for full Ministry within the Church. An outstanding example of ‘being the change we want to see’.”

Rev Radhika Sukumar-White says, “I have felt immensely honoured and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to Australian Women Preach over the years and add my voice to a growing, ecumenical chorus advocating and agitating for gender equality in the pulpit.”

Many have found the podcast valuable in their own spiritual life and others use it as a resource to prepare for their own preaching, including some male clergy.

Elizabeth Young RSM says, “I have really appreciated the clear theological grounding, real connections with ordinary life and homiletic skill of the women preachers in helping me delve deeper into the scripture of the week and prepare my own preaching.”

Rev Dr Jo Inkpin and Rev Penny Jones say, “It’s really wonderful to hear the voices of women across the churches, from different traditions, each bringing their own approach and insight. It shows what treasures there are amongst us and what a beloved community the church could truly be if we all modelled this.”

With the issue of lay preaching in the Catholic Church on the table at both Australia’s recent Plenary Council and the current Synod of Bishops 2021-2024, there is hope that change might yet come.

Patricia Gemmill reflects, “We continue to advocate for women’s right to use their Spirit-given gifts for the good of the whole community, and we sincerely hope to see change in our lifetime.”

Find our archive on Spotify and sample some of this rich fare.

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/awp>

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