



Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Conference March 2017



**HALF THE SKY: *Holding up, holding out
and holding on.***



Visiting speaker, Tina Beattie, Professor of Catholic Studies and Director of the Digby Stuart Research Centre for Religion, Society and Human Flourishing and Catherine of Siena College, at the University of Roehampton, London.

“Messengers of the joy of the Gospel are women and men who stand at the crossroads of life and experience the frontiers, welcome outcasts, so that their lives may be filled with the liberating message of the Gospel.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 2014)

Throughout the weekend Tina’s message was one of **hope**. Hope, not as optimism but rather, the hope of living today what makes tomorrow better! Hope as belief and determination with a **‘can do’** to make things better! Reiterating the message of hope she encouraged women to claim their place, their voice and



power in the world, in society and in the Church. Asking, ‘*where is this dialogue that Pope Francis speaks of?*’ she answered, it may be our time to respond. Quoting Margaret Wheatley, ‘*We are part of a wonderful tradition, but standing in the marginal space as women.*’ She felt that this is the time when we have a leader in Pope Francis who is prepared to listen.

“We can only talk of God as we know God, and we know God only through creatures, who represent God inadequately.” quoting Thomas Aquinas. If then ‘half the world’s voices’ (women) are not heard, (in society, in the Church) how is it possible to represent God, even in a dimmed light, inadequately? It is incumbent on women (*messengers of the Joy of the Gospel*) to walk with the weakest, listen to the poorest, hear the most vulnerable, the most marginalised and, if necessary, be a voice for them. Better yet, create the space, the platform so they can speak with their own voice! Acting for justice is not a choice – it is the very heart and foundation of the Gospel! (Matthew 25:35-40)

“Women, in and through their powerlessness, understand what it means to be vulnerable. Their openness to beginnings, even under conditions of hardship and privation, terror and torture, has daily renewed the world, making possible future beginnings... That women alone cannot give civic birth to a transformed politics is undoubtedly the case. But women, from a double vision that straddles powerlessness and power, are in a powerful position to insist with Albert Camus that one must never avert one's eyes from the suffering of children and, seeing that suffering, one is required to act.” Jean Bethke Elshtain, (*The Power and Powerlessness of Women*)

In his homily, 2nd February 2017 for ‘*World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life*’ Pope Francis said, “*We do well to take up the dreams of our elders, so that we can prophesy in our day and once more encounter what originally set our hearts afire.*”

At this 2017 JPIC Links conference, as we shared on the hope of taking up the dreams of our foremothers so as to be prophetic in our time, we are encouraged and energised to *‘fan into a flame’* the sparks that set out hearts on fire when we first committed ourselves to the Gospel.

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