

## **Greeting to European Women of Faith Network**

EWFN launch 13 November 2008, European Parliament, Brussels, from the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) by Ingrid Rosendorf Joys, Senior Information Officer

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

While 20 years ago many thought that God was dead and religion was dying, now he – or she – is back. God, or religion, is disturbing the ordered machinery of society, laying claims on the attention of politicians and bureaucrats alike.

But those religious traditionalists who rejoice and feel vindicated, those who believe that because God is back, old religious realities are back, are gravely mistaken. God is back, religion is back, but within entirely new realities. The end of a modern secularist hegemony has not given way to pre-modern religion, but to religion adjusting to a post-modern reality.

One of the major changes to religion is the move from majority hegemony to plurality: In many – not all – European countries, one religious community has been hegemonic for centuries. One of the biggest changes that are happening right now is that the majority religions are adjusting to a situation where they become conscious that they live side by side with a range of other religions.

It is almost self evident that this situation calls for – cries out for – dialogue; methods of engaging each other in respectful ways. And it calls for action across different religions. Different faith – common action.

I am here at this joyful occasion as representative for Religions for Peace – European Council of Religious Leaders. And it is a joyful event. The launch of European Women of Faith Network – Women against Poverty states two very

important elements. It states that Women of different faiths congregate and that they wish to join forces in a joint action, against poverty – different faith – common action.

The European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) brings together senior religious leaders from Europe's historical religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians as active participants. One of the co-moderators is Godfried Cardinal Danneels from Belgium. ECRL is one of four regional Inter-Religious Councils within the Religions for Peace network which is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action for peace since 1970.

ECRL is proud to count European Women of Faith Network as its affiliate. We are proud to be partners with this strong and vital network.

If one looks at women's situation in Europe today one can say that the change and development for women have been tremendous. I believe that the changes we have seen never could have taken place without the common commitment of various women movements and women networks. By this I don't say that European Women of Faith Network's agenda is similar with that of more secular movements but I believe it is a lesson to be learned. Women have other agendas than men. Women have other tools than men. Women have other visions than men. Women need to unite in order to achieve. Perhaps one can add that this is even more important in religious structures.

Anyway – a warm thank you and a warm congratulation to you all and good luck. ECRL is looking forward to be working with you and we at the ECRL secretariat are ready to help out in any possible way we can.

Thank you all for the attention.