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# Catholic women march on Vatican to call for female priests

By staff writers

A group of Roman Catholics marched to St Peter's Square in the Vatican yesterday (8 June) to call for women to be ordained as priests.

The pro-reform campaigners, from around six different organisations, urged the Vatican to begin formal discussions on meaningful changes to the priesthood. Police asked them to leave the Square as they were peacefully handing out flyers to passers-by.

The demonstration came at the beginning of a three-day Vatican rally to mark the end of the Church's year-long "celebration of the priest".

But one leading campaigner, Erin Saiz Hanna of the Women's Ordination Conference, said that this was no time to be celebrating the priesthood. She accused the Vatican of "turning a blind eye when men in its ranks destroy the lives of children and families".

Saiz Hanna emphasised the positive work being done by grassroots Roman Catholics around the world. She said, "While the hierarchy spends their time covering up scandals and throwing major celebrations for themselves, Catholic women are working for justice and making a positive difference in the world".

The groups represented included We Are Church, established following a major clerical abuse scandal in Austria, where calls for Church reform are gathering momentum. The group's Angelica Fromm linked sexual abuse with "a supervalued male priesthood with forced celibacy".

Austrian campaigners have been encouraged by comments by the Archbishop of Vienna, Christoph Schoenborn, who has said that the Church should discuss the question of clerical celibacy.

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