

Being a woman is tough reported the New Zealand Herald. Just ask Suzie Livingstone an Otago University Student who was having a go at being Santa in Whangarei a few years ago..

Suzie who was 19 at the time, got the job through Student Job Search and said in the Herald article, "I didn't really know what I was getting myself into. I have been constantly hassled by people." On her very first day Suzie was abused, had her sack stolen and even had the horror of being pushed by a group of younger teenagers as she walked past.

"I've been called all sorts of horrible things", Suzie shared.

The Whangarei Central City Promotions Chairperson Pam Tohill said, "I thought it was particularly low to attack Santa, and that the offenders showed absolutely no Christmas Spirit." The police have said that the offenders could face charges over the incident.

Suzie Livingstone did say that most of the children that she had seen had not cared one bit, that she was a woman Santa, but some people had really hassled her.

You're a woman, you're a stink Santa.

Being a woman is tough, certainly in the Baptist church. At one Baptist Assembly I attended, I spoke to one of the then, and now, very few Baptist Women Ministers. She shared about how her mother still wouldn't acknowledge that she was a Minister and that she even had a job. Her mother had told her that when she preached, she was like a dog standing up on its hind legs and speaking, so odd was it to have a woman preacher.

A prominent Baptist Cleric had told her one day, that because (in his opinion) her children were misbehaving that she should give up the ministry, go home, be a full time Mum and look after them properly.

She had tears in her eyes as she spoke about how hard it was being a Woman in Ministry, and how brutalizing she had found it.

You're a woman, you're a stink minister.

Being a woman is tough, anywhere in the church. When we read church history and it's position on women, we are and should be embarrassed. In fact, ashamed and angry may be more appropriate. Even the very core elements in the records we have about women in Jesus' ministry are askew, as people with other agendas have added and played with what was obviously a significant element in Jesus' work in the very beginning.

There is nowhere where this is truer than with Jesus Mum, Mary.

She is often depicted as Holy Mother. She is perpetual Virgin according to the Pope. She is Jesus Mum according to the gospels. She is the mother of Jesus' brothers and sisters. She is Joseph's wife. She is a place for women to hide, often in the face of what seems to be an angry God. She is a woman.

But that is not what the church has wanted for her to be. The church has not wanted a woman; a human, child bearing, sexually active, bleeding woman.

The church has often wanted what the Pope wanted ... a perpetual virgin.

A woman writer has reflected on what this means for Mary and for women in general.

“It is a grim fate for a woman to have to live in a dogmatic corset made by men. Especially unmarried, celibate men. Mary encountered this in an unparalleled way, she was not allowed a share in anything to do with female sexually, in anything connected with the natural process of conceiving or bearing a child. She was not allowed to get her ONLY SON through the love of a man, it had to be by the Holy Spirit, and there could be no pleasure. She was not allowed to bear her son in the natural way, because she had to remain intact in child birth. Finally, she was not allowed to have children later on, for that would have meant violation and shame. Thus, she is turned into a sort of sexless creature, to a shadow of a wife and mother, reduced to her function in salvation history. She was granted real life by the lords of the creation, only insofar, as it was necessary to fulfil that function properly. Beyond that it was denied her.”

The church has not wanted Mary!

The church has not wanted women!

You're a woman, you're stink!

Being a woman is tough ...

“So, a new Queen will arise from among the people. She will have the Spirit of the Lord upon her to give her wisdom, and knowledge to govern her people. She will know the Lord's will and honour God. She will not judge by appearance or hearsay; she will judge the poor fairly and defend the rights of the helpless. She will punish evildoers. She will rule her people with justice and integrity.”

...

“The church and women will lie down together in peace. And the Pope will be a woman. Archbishops and Nuns will eat together. Even the Popes children will be able to play with the archbishop, and in God's holy place, the church, the people will all be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. As the smell of perfume fills my granddaughter's bedroom.”

And all people will cry ...

You are a woman ... and like the real Mary ... you are magnificent.

Amen.