



FutureChurch FocusNews

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FutureChurch’s 30 Year Old Goal Becoming Reality Married Priests: What Would Louie Say?

From October 6 - 27, 2019, FutureChurch’s Deborah Rose-Milavec reported from the Synod on the Amazon where one of the most important and controversial developments, a goal that became a central part of FutureChurch’s educational and advocacy work 30 years ago, found a fresh opening.

Paragraph 111 of the final synod document recommends that the Church “establish criteria and dispositions on the part of the competent authority, within the framework of *Lumen Gentium* 26, to ordain priests suitable and esteemed men of the community, who have had a fruitful permanent diaconate and receive an adequate formation for the priesthood, having a legitimately constituted and stable family, to sustain the life of the Christian community through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments in the most remote areas of the Amazon region.”

While Pope Francis has not yet given his official blessing to this proposal, it is clear that he is open to it and we can expect it will find concrete applications, first in the Amazon, and, likely, at a later date, in the wider Church.

While this opening has the potential for creating yet another barrier for women seeking ordination to the permanent diaconate, we celebrate this moment of structural change and recall with profound gratitude the humble beginnings of a group of Catholic visionaries, lay and ordained, from the Cleveland diocese who dreamed this dream, including, co-founder, Fr. Louis Trivison.

Bill Plato, one of those original dreamers, remembers how the seeds of advocacy for married priests began at a parish council meeting at The Church of the Resurrection of Our Lord in Solon, Ohio. Fr. Louie was the first pastor there in 1971 modeling co-leadership with two women religious. In 1990, he co-founded FutureChurch along with Sr. Christine Schenk, CSJ and thirty three Cleveland Catholics from sixteen different parishes with the primary goal of keeping the Eucharist available to all Catholics as the number of priests declined.

“I believe the shortage of priests imperils the Eucharistic life of the church,” Fr. Louie once said. “The Eucharist is more important than the gender or the married state of the celebrant of Mass.”



CONTINUED PAGE THREE

Sr. Kate Kuenstler, Présenté

Sr. Kate Kuenstler, PHJC, died on October 28, 2019 after an extended illness. A long-time friend of FutureChurch, Kate helped Catholics defend their rights when bishops sought to close beloved parish homes.

Sr. Christine Schenk writes about their work together and Kate’s extraordinary achievements:



I first met Sister Kate Kuenstler in May 2007 as I sat in a pew at the Church of the Resurrection in Solon Ohio and listened to her speak about “Canon Law and the Rights of the Lay Christian Faithful.” Her passionate presentation sent shivers down my spine.

The FutureChurch Board had just approved a new Save Our Parish Community project to provide support and canonical resources to parishioners whose vital, solvent parishes were threatened with closure.

CONTINUED PAGE TWO



We had watched in horror as prelates in Boston—the epicenter of the clergy sex abuse crisis—summarily closed 65 vital parishes in that archdiocese, despite parishioner vigils and non-violent sit-ins that continued for years. As we suspected, and the Vatican later confirmed, Boston churches had been closed and sold and FutureChurch knew that if Boston succeeded in suppressing parishes and selling off churches it was only a matter of time before many (if not most) other US dioceses would follow suit. Parish

downsizing solved two problems for US bishops: 1) There were not enough priests to staff their parishes. 2) Most dioceses desperately needed money to pay legal fees resulting from clergy sex abuse lawsuits.

FutureChurch's Save Our Parish Community effort provided canonical resources to help Catholics resist unjust church closures. But we needed someone who knew canon law and who was passionate about the rights of the laity.

As I sat and listened to Sister Kate, I knew we had found that person.

Over the next 12 years, Sister Kate Kuenstler helped hundreds of parishioners file appeals to save their parish churches. When she began, we were told by national priest leaders that there was little to no chance of winning.

But Kate's creative use of canon law courageously "made a way where there was no way."

Her tireless defense of the canonical rights of the laity changed Vatican policy from automatically accepting US bishops' decisions to close and sell vibrant churches to one that preserves those churches as worship sites instead. Thanks to her efforts with FutureChurch, at least 38 churches (to date) won their appeals and are still in existence after being threatened with closure.

She blazed a trail for other canon lawyers to follow. Her pioneering work is chronicled in the award winning 2017 documentary *Foreclosing on Faith* (<http://foreclosingonfaith.com>) detailing parish appeals in New York, Cleveland, and Boston.

Bob Kloos—pastor and administrator of Cleveland's community of St. Peter—reflected on his experience of working with Kate.

Kate was there for the little people. For all the baptized. She was a servant first and foremost. What else could a professed Poor Handmaid be? She listened to their heart and she understood. She was accustomed to their disillusionment when they wrote, called, or showed up at her door. She would help. She would hope. She would heal. And often, she would win.

A great woman has earned her eternal rest. Others will have to step up now. But they will have to do so with precision, perseverance, and perfect clarity if Kate's legacy is to endure. There is no better way to honor Kate than to imitate her commitment to her calling – you to yours. There is still much work to be done.

Read the complete article at futurechurchnews.org. Go to futurechurch.org to learn more about our ongoing work, Save Our Parish Community.

FOCUSNews

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Deborah Rose-Milavec & Russ Petrus

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FOCUS is a semiannual publication of FutureChurch, a national organization of parish centered Catholics working for full participation of all Catholics in the life of the Church. The newsletter features information and commentary related to the mission of FutureChurch and reports on Church reform issues not prominently covered elsewhere.

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17305 Madison Avenue

Lakewood OH 44107

216-228-0869

email: debrose@futurechurch.org

Visit our website www.futurechurch.org

Celebrating FutureChurch: Past, Present, and Future

by Russ Petrus and Deborah Rose-Milavec



As co-directors, we recognize that one hazard of engaging this work with the level of commitment and passion that has always been a hallmark of FutureChurch, is that, sometimes, celebrating what we have achieved together gets pushed to the bottom of

the “to do” pile. So, anniversaries are the perfect time to stop, smile, sing, and celebrate all that has been dreamed, all that has been accomplished, and all the ways we will continue to co-create a Church where justice, mercy, and equality reign.

As FutureChurch prepares for our 30th anniversary in 2020, we will be offering in-depth interviews with FutureChurch pioneers, prophets, visionaries, and dreamers! Predicated on the belief that the source and summit of Catholic life, the Eucharist, should be available for all, FutureChurch will also ask younger Catholics -- theologians, activists, and change-agents -- to share their vision of Eucharist and their hope for the future.

We promise you will be inspired as we celebrate FutureChurch’s common achievements, those who carried the dream, and those who will continue to carry and shape it going forward! There are more details to come, but look for a celebratory concert in Cleveland with famed David Haas on September 25, 2020! Look for other events throughout the country as well!

Fall Event 2019



Our Fall Event, always a time for lifting up the needs of our Vatican II church and the People of God, was held on November 7. Vaticanista, Robert Mickens described how the tectonic shift from a Eurocentric church to a universal

church is shaking the very foundation of the Roman Curia, “because [Pope Francis] does not follow the Eurocentric protocols. ... He is more concerned about ‘what would Jesus do’ than what does canon law say.”



Trivison Award recipient Marie Collins, member of the original Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, whose resignation became a rallying cry among Catholics for justice for victims told us, “I spoke to the Pope last August

in Ireland and I put this [universal safeguarding policy] to him. He said that he couldn’t do it because there are so many different cultures in the world.” She continued, “I don’t believe that’s an argument that we can accept. There should be no difference between a child in Africa or a child in England or a child in France...Every child has the same value

as every other child and the continent they live on should not decide the level of protection they get. So as far as I’m concerned, universal protection is what we should have.”



Receiving the Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders, Karen Gargamelli-McCreight talked about developing a lay led intentional community in the heart of New York City. After speaking about other aspects of their work, Karen said, “A

third aspect of our life is lay formation and working for church accountability. We were surprised, overwhelmed in fact, with how quickly and how many young people came proverbially, knocking at our door. To address the need for inclusive, intentional, and a cooperatively-led Catholic liturgy, each month we host a gathering (a tradition inherited from Dan Berrigan’s community) for 30 - 40 people. For those gathered we offer preaching workshops and opportunities to take on meaningful leadership roles.”
(More at www.futurechurch.org/2019fallvent)

Married Priests (continued from page one)

When asked how Louie would feel about the latest proposal from Synod on the Amazon to open the priesthood to married men, Plato didn’t hesitate, “Louie would be very happy; he was so dedicated to it.”

Recalling fondly that “Louie was like a father to me,” Plato remembered how “we talked about our hopes for married priests all the time.”

“For Louie, it was all about the centrality of the Eucharist,” said Plato.

“The only complaint Louie might have is that the synod proposal to open the priesthood to married men didn’t happen sooner,” laughed Plato. “But, Louie knew it would be a long haul.”

“Louie thought the door to married priests would open first, then the door to women priests would open, another issue he was passionate about seeing come to fruition.”

Plato, encouraged by the group of bishops from the Amazon who understand the centrality of the Eucharist and who have been able to move the issue of married priests forward in the Church said, “This is what motivated Louie, and that is positive and hopeful.”

“It wasn’t always easy for Louie,” recalled Plato. “While he had many close friends and priests who supported him, he also had his skeptics. So today, we celebrate.”

Mary of Magdala Celebrations lift up ‘Voices that Challenge’ by Russ Petrus

“I have seen the Lord.”

These five words, spoken by Mary of Magdala to Jesus’ disciples and friends after his Resurrection appearance to her, changed everything. We know, however, they weren’t easy words to hear, for the Gospel of Mark tells us “when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.”

Perhaps the disciples were too grief-stricken to entertain the possibility that this wasn’t the end of the Jesus story. Perhaps after watching their friend and teacher violently crucified, they were too traumatized to hope that good could conquer evil, that light could dispel the darkness. Perhaps they were too paralyzed by fear to move into something new. Or maybe it was that the news was coming from Mary of Magdala -- a woman -- who would have been forbidden by Jewish law to give testimony... But eventually their grief was healed; their despair turned to hope; and their fear finally gave way to courage.

Mary of Magdala challenges today, just as she did some 2,000 years ago. Speaking to us from Scripture, she challenges our notions of what’s possible with God; whom God chooses to be ministers; whom God sends to speak, testify, and preach; and with whom God entrusts the Good News.

Following in the footsteps of the Apostle to the Apostles, a growing chorus is making their voices heard. They are women called to serve in leadership and ordained ministry in the Church, talking about their vocations. They are students and parents – victims of gun violence – calling for action. They are lay Catholics calling for justice for victims of clergy sex abuse. They are women telling their #MeToo stories. They are migrants and refugees, speaking with their feet, telling us of the horrors they’ve experienced and the new life they seek. They are people of every age, race, religion, and situation in life speaking truth in love -- often to power -- challenging Church and society.

FutureChurch’s 2019 Mary of Magdala Celebration guide and resource sought to lift up, amplify and celebrate these voices. Their words became the foundation for the Liturgy of the Word, which culminated in the Resurrection narrative of John’s Gospel. The resource was downloaded by more than 200 communities and individuals throughout the world who joined us to celebrate Mary of Magdala on or around July 22nd.

In Cleveland, the Liturgy of the Word featured the voices of Emma Gonzalez, Parkland student and March for Our Lives Organizer, challenging policies that enable gun violence; Melissa Cedillo, a Church reformer, challenging an all-male



hierarchy; Shannen Dee Williams, an African American Catholic and historian, challenging the Church to stand in solidarity with all people of color; Deacon Ray Dever, whose daughter is transgender, challenging recent statements from the Church about LGBTQ Catholics; Norma Pimentel, director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, challenging family separation at the border; Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, challenging the use of the death penalty; Dr. Sylvia Hood Washington, an environmental science researcher, challenging Catholics to embrace *Laudato Si* and work for climate justice.

Each reading was read by a well-known member of the Cleveland FutureChurch community who has been actively involved in activism and advocacy on the issue addressed in their particular reading.

We were also blessed to host Gina Messina, Ph.D. – a feminist theologian, writer, commentator, and professor – as our guest preacher. During her reflection, Gina reminded the congregation that Mary of Magdala – a women of means and privilege – supported Jesus’ itinerant mission to spread the Good News and ultimately followed him to the Cross. She asked us to consider where Jesus’ mission would take Mary of Magdala today: to the border; to March for Our Lives, Black Lives Matter, and Women’s rallies and marches; to protests against unjust firings of LGBTQ Catholic workers. . .

In conclusion, Gina invited the congregation to consider our own means and privilege – whatever it might be – and how and where we might best put it to use for the sake of the Gospel.

FutureChurch Supporters Pass on a Tradition

Last year, FutureChurch supporters sent gifts, large and small, to help three women, Nontando Hadebe, Sheila Pires, and Annie Burns join our Rome pilgrimage exploring early Christian sites for evidence of women's authority. All three women felt their lives had been transformed by the experience and offered their reflections.



Nontando Hadebe, a professor of Theology at St. Augustine's College in Johannesburg, South Africa,

has dedicated her life to women's equality in the church and in society. Of the pilgrimage, she said, "I dived into the experience-- body, mind and soul--drinking deeply from the wisdom and research of Sr Christine, the spirituality of Russ, the organization of Uta and the solidarity and shared vision of my pilgrim sisters!"

She continued, "It is one thing to engage with feminist/womanist theologies but to add physicality, spirituality, scholarship and women in solidarity is beyond description! It was life giving, celebratory and sacred. For me every aspect served to enrich my experience. The sites were well coordinated with lectures and worship. The worship and spirituality offered a focus on women in history and a celebration of their lives and witness. The entire experience was imbued with 'women in authority in the early Church' and inspired us to see this as the norm rather than the exception as we have been led to believe."

Sheila Pires of South Africa shared, "As a radio producer and presenter of 'women feature' programs that look at the role of women within the Church and society at large, this pilgrimage enriched me with new understandings that I will bring back to my work on

women with their vital role in the Church and in society."

For Sheila, having Mass in the Catacombs was the most touching experience. "As we walked into that space reserved for us, I suddenly remembered a vision I once had in 2012 where I held a bible on the one hand and raised my other hand in a preaching pose. Suddenly it all came back to me--the poses on the walls and the drawings of women preaching in the dim lights in the catacombs."



"As I stood to read the Gospel, I realized that I was living the vision I had in 2012. As I write, I am still in awe and

maybe in denial because of my very traditional Catholic teachings growing up. Yet it has all happened in God's time. My calling, known only to myself, somehow came to the fore that day. I believe that everything happens for a reason, and those events happened according to God's will. I came back home feeling empowered to embrace my gifts with more confidence and to continue serving the Lord with more zeal and determination. I will do this by spreading Gospel values through the airwaves, with family and friends, and wherever God takes me."

Annie Burns preached during the Mass at the Catacombs. Here is an excerpt of her witness:

We have all heard the parable of the prodigal son more times than I imagine we can count. Modern day interpretations error on the side of being patronizing, as we are over and over again told how foolish, wasteful, sinful, and in need of mercy we are, from so many of our dear brother clerics at the pulpit.

But, what if it's not us who are the prodigal ones? Not us, but our church

leaders who are the prodigal sons? What if it is they who have been foolish, wasteful, sinful, and in need of mercy?



Like the prodigal son, many of the leaders of our church have lost themselves in a distant country, an elitist,

protectionist, boys-club culture that does not recognize the priorities of Jesus, nor his message of radical acceptance, mercy, and love. Like the prodigal son, our church has hired out its services to the highest bidder. We more commonly refer to this as politics. And while the prodigal son went hungry as he fed and cared for someone else's swine, our church finds itself providing communion and Eucharist, memory and gratitude, for others, which it itself has not tasted in fullness for a very long time. Unlike the prodigal son, many of our lost brother clerics have not found their way back to us. Few have come repenting the pain they have caused, the gifts they have squandered, the grace they have denied.

How do we invite these our brothers back into fold? What will the day look like when we see them dotting the horizon, slowly making their way back home to us? f

We the church, and together with our brothers we can mourn together the lost moments, all of the time we spent estranged from each other. And then, trusting that what God provides for us will be enough, we can all pull up a chair and share in what would truly be a heavenly banquet.

To learn more about our next pilgrimage to Greece in March 2020, visit www.greece2020.org

How Long Will Our Labor Last?: Reflections on the Synod

by Deborah Rose-Milavec



Deborah Rose-Milavec asks a question during a Synod press briefing

I have had sisters and friends who spent long hours in labor. One of my friends was in labor for 48 hours. She was absolutely worn out by the time she gave birth. But the longest labor recorded to date was 75 days! A Polish woman who lost one of her triplets, managed to keep the other two babies alive by keeping her feet above her head for 75 days until the babies could be born, safely. I think most mothers will do whatever they need to do in order to bring a child safely into this world and to keep them safe after they are born.

But in the press hall on October 26, as I read the final document, I felt the pangs of a labor that has gone on too long for women and their allies.

There is no doubt that we entered a new phase in the realization of women's ministries and especially the diaconate during this synod. At the 2015 synod on the family, Archbishop Andre Durocher asked to open the discussion on women deacons. In 2016, UISG prompted Pope Francis to take action on the question by studying the possibility. In May 2019, Pope Francis delivered a report that disappointed many saying there was not enough consensus to go forward.

But we sprang forward at this synod. Unlike any prior synod, there was a majority -- women religious, indigenous women and men, and bishops -- who advocated strongly, not for further study, but for ordaining women as deacons who are already providing diaconal ministry in their villages.

So when paragraph 103 called for further study of women deacons, I wanted to say with tears for my sisters who are so faithful and who have waited so long,

"How blasted long is this labor is going to last?"

The paragraph reads: *In the many consultations carried out in the Amazon, the fundamental role of religious and lay women in the Church of the Amazon and its communities was recognized and emphasized, given the multiple services they provide. In a large number of these consultations, the permanent diaconate for women was requested. For this reason the theme was important during the Synod. Already in 2016, Pope Francis has created a "Study Commission on the Diaconate of Women" which, as a commission, arrived at a partial result based on what the reality of the diaconate of women was like in the early centuries of the Church and its implications for today. We would therefore like to share our experiences and reflections with the Commission and await its results (103).*

While this means ordination to the permanent diaconate is still in play, there are also reasons to be concerned.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Prefect, Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, has been at the head of this commission. He has a powerful role in how this plays out. He was appointed in 2017 for five years, so re-opening the commission will only result in success if we have our champion Phyllis Zagano there, but also a fresh infusion of theologians and bishops from the Amazon region and other regions where women's ordination is welcome. Otherwise, a re-opening will likely result in another stalemate and stall.

Further, Paragraph 111 opens the door to a married priesthood for the Amazon region and perhaps the wider church. While that is a cause for rejoicing in that it opens the door to a more inclusive priesthood, this, in itself, could also serve as a new barrier to ordination of women deacons since in practice, it will be permanent deacons who will be considered first for this ordination since they are "proven men":

We propose to establish criteria and dispositions on the part of the competent authority, within the framework of Lumen Gentium 26, to ordain priests suitable and esteemed men of the community, who have had a fruitful permanent diaconate and receive an adequate formation for the priesthood, having a legitimately constituted and stable family, to sustain the life of the Christian community through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments in the most remote areas of the Amazon region. In this regard, some were in favour

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

of a more universal approach to the subject.

This practice, for all intents and purposes, cripples a key argument that has been a cornerstone for the case for women deacons -- the argument and reality that the permanent diaconate is a separate ministry from the priesthood. The actual practice blurs the distinction since it is married permanent deacons who will be considered first for this new pathway to a married priesthood.

For the churchmen who want to keep women's ordination to the priesthood at bay, this will provide another "reason" for scrapping the idea of women's ordination to the permanent diaconate.

Pope Francis ended the synod with a few remarks about women saying, "The final document falls short in expressing the real value women have within the Church and their role in the transmission of the faith. They should be in commissions but the role of women in the Church goes much farther than function."

Breathe!

When in labor, there is a pattern of breathing that allows one to get through one painful contraction after another. I became rather skilled at this particular pattern of breathing as a mother of five. It is a skill that buoys me up when dealing with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Breathe!

When it comes to opening doors to ministry and governance for all my Catholic sisters, there is nothing I want more than to deliver. We are a body, the Body of Christ, women and men together, pregnant with a brand new life...brand new ways of being women in the church...of being church together.

Our pains are sharp and the contractions are strong. We are ready to deliver new forms of ministry for women! We are ready to deliver the diaconate! The vote! The priesthood! Governance! The cardinalate! Authority! Decision making! The papacy!

And we stand together, breathing, sometimes crying out when the pain is great, until this new life is born.

Exploring God-Images with Girls by Jennifer Mertens



It is a joy, challenge, and adventure to teach religion at an all-girls Catholic high school. I am privileged to witness my students' search for a faith that embraces their whole selves as young women. Frequently, I am also reminded of the central role of God-images in this journey. Many adolescent girls explore questions such as: Who is God in my life? What does God look like? What does it mean to know God as a young woman?

As part of this faith journey, it can be transformative for girls to explore the full breadth and depth of Christian speech for the Holy. In class, we imagine God as a bright sunbeam reflected through a beautiful and intricate stained-glass window. Each colored piece of glass represents a word or image for God that reflects God's divine light in a unique way. Royal Red: God as a just and powerful leader. Teardrop Blue: Divine Comforter. Springtime Green: Gentle Sower of New Life.

Exploring a range of God-images is a holy, exciting and even unpredictable enterprise. For teen girls, encountering female images of God in the Christian tradition can be especially powerful. From Wisdom Sophia to the parable of the woman searching for a lost coin -- our faith can invite girls to more fully know themselves in the Divine image. In a unique way, female images for God affirm the sacramentality of girls' own bodies and draw them into deeper participation in the body of Christ.

Girls who encounter a rich array of Christian God-talk can grow in their relationship with God and with the Christian tradition. They can notice how the many panes of a stained-glass window -- of our God-images -- mediate our experiences of the Holy and function as a lens for our own self-image. Girls can also articulate more clearly the possibilities and historical challenges of naming women's bodies, minds and spirits as beautiful images of God.

Today, young women need a God whose flesh makes sacred their own. Our Catholic community can respond by fully attending to the connection between human dignity and human speech for the Holy. This means delighting in a colorful array of names and images for the Divine. It especially involves recovering those God-images, particularly female ones, which too often remain buried or suppressed within our tradition.

Let us pray for hearts courageous enough to encounter this Living God -- She who longs to be known, named, and celebrated within our young women today.

A Catholic Woman Changes Her Mind about Feminism and Faith

by Robin Senior



FutureChurch's email read, "Join the Movement! Feminism and Faith in Union." My reaction was visceral. "Feminism" the word congers up angry, righteous, far left liberal women. I didn't even open it.

A week later, the subject line read, "Feminism and faith in Union! Celebrating the power of activism and sacrament for today!" Somehow "sacrament" made the invitation palatable and I opened the email. I sat with the idea in the Buddhist Tradition and asked Our Blessed Mother's advice in the Catholic Tradition and concluded feminist or not perhaps I should check it out. At least I can go to Mass.

The idea of experiencing different liturgies and attending various churches holds a distinct appeal for me. On Saturday, I mentioned the event to a priest friend who urged me go. Still unconvinced later I dined with my daughter, daughter-in-law, and two-year old grandson, at their house. Discussing my quandary, together we looked at the website. It read,

Merriam-Webster declared "feminism" the Word of the Year for 2017. Feminism was the most looked-up word in its online dictionary, with 70% more searches than in 2016. Their definitions: "the theory supporting the political, economic and social equality of the sexes" and "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Did you know?"

I did not know! But I still disliked the word. My daughters were persuasive – one argument in particular moved me. "Do it for your grandchildren." And so donning a salmon scarf, I found myself on the train to NYC at 9am Sunday morning feeling grateful for the adventure ahead. Walking from the subway savoring the blue sky and winter sun, I turned into the north west corner of Union Square Park and came upon the group of about 100 people, many sporting pink hats, pink and white buttons, and holding signs. I admired one sign that read, "There are many gifts, but the same Spirit . . . all are one in Christ Jesus," (1 Cor. 12:4ff). The woman holding it directed me to a little area with others that were up for grabs and one called to me which read "This little light of mine" with a candle in the middle and I held it up. Others were holding signs that read "Catholic Lesbians," "We want DACA", "The Women Who Stayed", "Interfaith Committee", "Peace and Justice",

and one in particular I loved had a drawing of Jesus on the cross surrounded by the words "WWJD, Who would Jesus Deport?" Many were signs of ministries from the Church of St. Francis Xavier where we would later celebrate Mass.

Three women ministers opened with a prayer. FutureChurch's own Deborah Rose-Milavec offered a prayer as did other women from Call to Action and Women's Ordination Conference co-sponsors of the event along with The Women Who Stayed, a group from St. Francis Xavier named for to the women who remained at the foot of the cross during the Crucifixion. A particularly moving prayer proffered by a Native American Woman who

asked us to bless a body of water each day for those who go without. A trio of teen age girls from the church gave the final blessing. Then we all joined together, a joyful, peaceful stream of humanity chanting, sign waving and dancing the short way to the Church.

The enthusiastic choir, voices raised in song greeted us as we entered the Church, a large beautiful old building replete with wonderful paintings and stained glass windows. The service began with all of us turning to greet our neighbors. In place of a homily a woman asked us to observe 5 minutes of silence "in solidarity with the millions of women, and of all peoples, whose voices have been silenced. During this time, consider praying for the wisdom to become aware of those women, and others in your life and community,

whose voices could be louder. Pray for the courage to make room for the voices that are missing. During the silence, look around at all the people surrounding you. If they are holding a sign, read the sign. Realize and trust that we are moving forward in the company of Jesus."

It was powerful! At the end of the Mass, Jesuit Fr. Dan Corrou reminded us that as wonderful as this gathering had been, it was only a beginning. We need to be mindful that just as in the day's Gospel Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John were called, we too are called. Each one of us has gifts and each one of us can do something to bring the light of Christ to help other voices be heard.

I left feeling uplifted, with a better understanding of what it means to be a Feminist. I would still not label myself as such - at least not without some caveats - the word, however, no longer repels me. Conversion is a process. I may get there yet.



Catholic Women Preach Celebrates Three Silence-Shattering Years



Elizabeth Donnelly and Russ Petrus represent CWP at the Women of the Church Conference

The revolutionary and silence-shattering initiative, Catholic Women Preach, marked its third anniversary on November 1, 2019 – All Saints Day. Originally envisioned as a three-year project, the hope was to complete one full liturgical cycle (Years A, B, and C) of women preaching on the scriptures of each Sunday and some feast days. But the project's reception and reach has exceeded even the wildest dreams of the steering committee, which began meeting over four years ago, leading them to one easy conclusion: we must keep pushing ahead and lifting up the voices of women in our Church.

The need for a platform like Catholic Women Preach was only sharpened this past September, when a popular Catholic news outlet published an article listing reasons why Catholic women should not preach. And the importance of the project for women was on full display in October when, at the Women of the Church Conference, Catholic Women Preach was lifted up as a model by not one, but all three keynote presenters to extended rounds of applause. Keynote presenters were Joan Rosenhauer, Executive Director of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA; Cecilia González-Andrieu, Associate Professor of Theology at Loyola Marymount; and Kerry Alys Robinson, Founding Executive Director and Global Ambassador of Leadership Roundtable.

Catholic Women Preach has enjoyed much success over the last three years: 175 remarkable women contributing 178 inspiring reflections; a loyal community of more than 8,600 email subscribers, Facebook fans, Twitter followers, and YouTube subscribers; and nearly 250,000 views accounting for more than 1.1 million minutes of watch time.

The podcast version – launched in 2018 – continues to expand its audience with nearly 20,000 plays to date. Audio-only podcasts are released on Friday.

There were also collaborations with Ignatian Solidary Network's Education for Justice and Catholic Mobilizing Network as well as the Boston College School of Theology online continuing education program and *America Magazine*.

But beyond the numbers are the very real lived experiences of Catholics – women and men – who have come to count on Catholic Women Preach and whose faith lives have benefitted because of it. Viewers write in or post on social media nearly every week about their experience of Catholic Women Preach. Here are two comments from younger Catholics:

"I have spent the past few years (re)learning about my Catholic faith and what it means to be Catholic in our current moment. Right now, I have more questions than answers. . . What has been a shining light for me during this time is Catholic Women Preach . . ." Kaitlin, a young adult, sharing a Catholic Women Preach reflection with her Facebook friends.

"Catholic Women Preach is the best! I parish hop like many young Catholics, so the homilies are not always the best, but CWP has curated really stellar reflections," Angelo, a graduate student talking about Catholic Women Preach on another Facebook page

Indeed, Catholic Women Preach both reveals and helps to satisfy the deep need for the voices and insights of women in our Church. Moreover, by bearing witness to the contributions and giftedness of Catholic women, Catholic Women Preach is advancing the conversation with and about women at every level of the Church. In some ways it comes as no surprise that those who would silence women are taking note.

But Catholic women will not be silent – not when they have incredible wisdom, insight, and experience to offer to the People of God.

Catholic Women Preach begins its next liturgical cycle on the First Sunday of Advent – December 1, 2019 – with preaching from Sr. Jeannine Gramick, co-founder of New Ways Ministry.

Visit www.catholicwomenpreach.org for preaching from women for each Sunday and some holy days.

Change the Art, Change the Story, Change the Church

Imagine a Catholic Church where the name of Mary Magdalene immediately evokes images -- not of a repentant prostitute -- but of the first witness to the Resurrection, joyfully announcing the Good News to the Apostles and friends of Jesus.

Over 20 years ago, FutureChurch encouraged Catholics to hold Mary of Magdala Celebrations as a way of recovering her authentic memory. The elevation of her memorial to a Feast Day marks progress. Still, most Catholics, including many who are ordained, continue to imagine St. Mary Magdalene as a repentant prostitute. Recognizing both the challenge and opportunity of this moment, in July 2019, FutureChurch launched another phase of our 20-year-old campaign to retrieve the authentic memory of St. Mary of Magdala.



During our “Feeding Five Thousand Campaign” FutureChurch will produce high quality posters (18 x 12) of *St. Mary of Magdala Proclaims the Resurrection* by artist Margaret Beaudette, S.C., and along with a cover letter explaining the significance of the art and a copy of Pope Francis’s decree, “Apostle of the Apostles,” will send them to five thousand Catholic schools, universities, and seminaries. This exciting project is a first of its kind effort to make the art of St. Mary of Magdala as “Apostle to the Apostles” widely available for Catholic students of all ages. **We hope you will support this effort at futurechurch.org/store/joindonate.**

Power to the People: From Clericalism to Collaboration by Russ Petrus



In the wake of the most recent revelations of clergy sex abuse and coverup, many -- including Pope Francis -- have diagnosed clericalism as one underlying disease doing great harm to our Church. Still, a question remains: How do we rid ourselves once and for all of every form and manifestation of clericalism and its ugly counterpart, patriarchy?

FutureChurch’s 2019 teleconference series, “Power to the People: from Clericalism to Collaboration” was a significant contribution to the ongoing conversation, seeking the input and advice from top experts well-positioned to help the Church confront and overcome clericalism. The eight-part series began in January 2019 and continued through October. Nearly 500 Catholics from around the US registered and joined us in these conversations – a sure sign that the People of God are ready for a healthier, holier Church.

The series began with Jesuit priest and journalist, Tom Reese, SJ, who provided an overview of the clergy sex abuse crisis, reflecting on the latest developments, and outlining the challenges and opportunities ahead. Francine Cardman, Ph.D., presented a historical overview of the development of hierarchy and clericalism in the Roman Church. Tom Doyle discussed how canon law upholds a clerical system and culture in the Church, which perpetuates a cycle of abuse and coverup. Kerry Robinson, founding executive director of Leadership Roundtable, put forth a vision of Church finance and resource management, where laity are lead at every level. Katie Grimes, Ph.D., discussed the model and language of “servant leadership.” Sociologist Michele Dillon, Ph.D., presented the “euphemization of power,” arguing that the hierarchy uses techniques of euphemization and mystification to both downplay the tragedy of the clergy abuse crisis and coverup. Rev. Donald Cozzens, approached clericalism from the personal – rather than the structural – perspective. And the series concluded in October with a presentation on Seminary reform from Drs. C. Colt Anderson and Christopher Bellitto. Both former seminary professors, Drs. Anderson and Bellitto discussed their experience as lay people inside the seminary system and their proposals for changing that system which currently serves as a breeding ground for clericalism.

To listen back to these insightful and helpful conversations, visit www.futurechurch.org/powertothepeople.

Distinguished, Prophetic Catholics Join FutureChurch Board



Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, a member of the FutureChurch board since June 2018, has agreed to serve as Board Member Emeritus for the next three years. A long-time friend of FutureChurch, in 2013, he prayerfully presided over the transition of leadership from co-founder Sr. Christine Schenk to Deborah Rose-Milavec. On the wider stage, Bishop Gumbleton has been a prominent voice for justice in the world and in the Church. A retired auxiliary bishop of the Detroit archdiocese, he is a leading voice for peace, justice, and civil rights in the United States. He is a co-author of the 1983 U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference Pastoral Letter, "The Challenge of Peace." He has traveled throughout the world calling for an end to war and the abolition of nuclear weapons. He has spoken out courageously on behalf the victims of sexual abuse within the Catholic church, and he has advocated for the full participation and the rights of women and LGBT people in the Catholic Church.



Dr. Shannen Dee Williams is a historian with research and teaching specializations in African-American, women's, religious, and civil rights history. She is at work on her first book, *Subversive Habits: The Untold Story of Black Catholic Nuns in the United States*, which is under contract with Duke University Press. A winner of numerous awards, Williams received the inaugural Sister Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders from FutureChurch for using history to foster racial justice and reconciliation in religious congregations of women.



Reverend Fred Daley, pastor of All Saints Parish in Syracuse NY, has been a prophetic voice for many social justice issues, including LGBTQI inclusion and women's ordination. He came out as gay man fourteen years ago, and wrote about that process for America Magazine. Daley said the day he came out, which happened to be the Feast

of the Annunciation, was "the longest day of my life." Yet, overwhelmingly, Fred found support from his community and his bishops. A staunch supporter of women's ordination, alongside other Catholic women and men, he regularly witnesses to the injustice of excluding women from the priesthood.



Nontando Hadebe is a lay woman theologian with a doctorate in theology from St Augustine College where she now teaches. A member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians as well as the TCCRSA Women's Caucus comprising Catholic women theologians in Africa, all her work revolves around the pursuit of women's equal participation in the Catholic Church. "Women's exclusion is a scandal in our society...and a betrayal of the highest ideals of our faith, social teachings and history where women's leadership is part of historical development of the Church. "



Sean Gargamelli-McCreight is a co-founder of Benincasa Community with James Hannigan and Karen Gargamelli-McCreight. Their community is rooted in the traditions of the Catholic Worker, Women Religious, and the former "98th Street/Thompson St" Jesuit community. Benincasa Community is a critical home-base for young adult Catholics struggling to discern their vocation (women's leadership, LGBTQ rights) within a broken and often violent Church employing a rhythm grounded by the pillars of community, prayer, study, and action.



Rita Houlihan rejoined the board after previously serving for eight years. A self-described Mary Magdalene advocate, Rita has been instrumental in using art and scholarship to lift up women in history and today in parishes, universities, and beyond.

To Speak Truth in Love by Sr. Christine Schenk

In *To Speak the Truth in Love: A Biography of Therese Kane*, RSM Christine Schenk, CSJ recounts the life of Sr. Theresa Kane and her lasting legacy for the Church she loves.

A must read, this book documents an important period of contemporary Catholic history when Theresa Kane and so many other sisters exercised unparalleled leadership in the Catholic Church by speaking truth to power—with love, wisdom, and grace—open all the ministries of the Church to women. Receive a copy of the book when you donate \$125 or more to FutureChurch's Advent campaign. **Donate at futurechurch.org/store/joindonate.**



FocusNews

Greece Pilgrimage: Following in the Footsteps of Our Foremothers in Faith



Sister Christine Schenk, CSJ and Russ Petrus led the 2019 pilgrimage to Rome.

Join Christine Schenk, CSJ, and Russ Petrus, on pilgrimage Greece and “meet” Phoebe, Lydia, Euodia, and many more early Christian women leaders!

Scheduled for March 4-13, 2020 our pilgrimage includes visit to: **Thessaloniki**, where we remember a group of young women, led by Agape, Eirene, and Chione, martyred there in the early fourth century; **Philippi**, a Center of Paul’s early ministry, where Lydia (Acts 16), founded a house church and where Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3) are thought to be among the episkopoi and diakonoi leading the church there; **Corinth**, where Paul first met Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3) who founded house churches in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome; the seaport of **Cenchreae** the home of Paul’s patron Phoebe, the female deacon who carried his letter to the Romans to Rome (Rom 16:1-2); the hilltop women’s monasteries of Meteora; and a women’s monastery, St. Nectarios, dedicated to the most recent saint in the Orthodox Church. We will also take in some other must-sees while in Greece including: **Delphi**, and the Agora, Acropolis, and Parthenon in **Athens**.

The \$2199 registration fee (\$2899 for a single room) includes lodging, ground transportation and transfer to the island of Aegina, two meals per day (breakfast and evening meal), guides, entrance fees, some gratuities and the experience of a lifetime! Participants are responsible for their own airline travel and fare. You will fly into Thessaloniki on the first day and depart from Athens on the final day.

Visit www.greece2020.org for more information, a complete itinerary, a sample flight schedule, and to register.

Register no later than January 5, 2020.

