Please support this work! Donate $125 or more and received a copy of Sr. Chris Schenk’s groundbreaking book, Crispina and Her Sisters!

More than 105,000 views in the first year! Please support Catholic Women Preach!

Please take the Catholic Women Preach survey and help us to make it better.

Sign up for our next teleconference with Jamie Manson on January, 2017 as she discusses the future of religious life!

From the Executive Director's Desk

There are few things that bring more joy to my heart than to know that an initiative we have helped birth is a blessing to our Catholic sisters and brothers.

Catholic Women Preach (CWP), an online preaching resource launched just one year ago, has grown far beyond our initial expectations. In the first year, Catholic women preachers from the United States and around the world have drawn over 105,000 views. This is an
affirmation that Catholics are ready -- even hungry -- to hear and be inspired by the faith perspective of women in the church.

The numbers tell a story, but we are currently conducting a survey to learn how our viewers are responding to Catholic Women Preach (CWP); how they are using it in their parishes or communities; and how we can improve it.

While the survey has just been released, we are already receiving responses that are exciting and encouraging.

- Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents view CWP to get the faith perspective of Catholic women reflecting on Scripture.
- Seventy-two percent (72%) of respondents view CWP weekly.
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents say that CWP helps them to understand the untapped potential of women as preachers.
- Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents say CWP is part of their spiritual practice.
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents share CWP with friends.
- Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents belong to a Catholic parish.

Respondents also offered comments on the value of CWP. When asked what they found valuable responses included:

"I like to listen and I then like to
"The fabulous DIVERSITY of your preachers! The timeliness of the material. I like Catholic Women Preach the way it is!"

"All of it! I love the variety of women who share the word— a more inclusive church and message. Everything!"

We will give a full report from the survey in a few weeks. If you have not completed the survey, please help us learn what is of value to you and how we can improve CWP by adding your response.

In the meantime, don't miss our line up as we enter a new liturgical year. Catholic Women Preach will expand your faith perspective as you open yourself to the inspirational wisdom of women as we prepare our hearts this Advent for the coming of God's love into this world and the work of the Gospel.

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

**Cardinal Marx gives more definition to his plan to appoint lay people to lead parishes**

Christa Pongratz-Lippitt reports that Cardinal Reinhard Marx's duties in Rome have not detracted from his efforts to reshape his diocese back in Bavaria. In March he announced plans to allow lay people to lead parishes, saying a prototype
would be tried out in each region.

“We do not want to proceed by a kind of brainstorming Metaplan technique,” he said in his new interview with the Münchner Merkur.

“I want to drive by sight, proceed step by step and also experiment. The whole project must be well prepared as we are entering unchartered territory,” the cardinal explained.

“We will be learning by doing, as it were. We will have to consider what relationship the leadership team will have with the dean and what roles the auxiliary bishop and the priest will play.”

Marx again pointed out that the priest would not have the leading role and would not oversee everything in these newly formatted parishes.

“He will, of course, celebrate the Eucharist and proclaim the Word of God, but I am convinced that an authoritarian style of leadership – according to the motto: one person must call the shots and the others click their heels and obey – is no longer called for. Modern leadership consists of pooling people’s talents and not getting them to carry out one’s own ideas,” he insisted.

The cardinal said it’s absolutely essential to make parishes more alive, but said this means the Church has to bring its language up to date.
“People increasingly find it difficult to understand what we are proclaiming and do not even understand our sermons,” he said.

“I do not fear for the future of the faith and the Gospel Message, as it is a very powerful message indeed. But we must try and find new ways of reaching people,” he stressed.

The interviewer also asked Cardinal Marx if he thought Christians could be members of the “Alternative for Germany” (AfD), a right-wing political party that rejects the Church’s stance on refugees and immigrants.

The Argentines have interpreted *Amoris Laetitia* correctly

Marie Malzac writes that Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin has affirmed that the Argentine interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia* is correct.

In more than 1,000 pages of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the official gazette of the Holy See that contains documents the pope wishes to make public, the paragraph in question bestows the character official Magisterium – or the teachings of the pope – on an exchange of letters between Francis and bishops of the Buenos Aires pastoral region on the subject of the bishops’ plans to allow, in some circumstances, remarried divorcees to receive communion...
CST and Sexual Harassment

Brianne Jacobs argues that the cornerstone of Catholic social teaching is the defense of human dignity. Every person has innate and infinite dignity imparted by God. All actions in and by society may be judged as just or unjust, good or sinful, based on whether or not they uphold this fundamental dignity intrinsic to every human life. Here are three reasons why sexual harassment violates Catholic social teaching.

Sexual harassment violates the dignity of the person being harassed. If you are a victim, it communicates that your value is not based on your dignity as a human person. Your value is based on the sexual role you play, without your consent, for the person harassing you. It is diminishing: It reduces you from a full person to an object for use by the harasser. Healthy sexuality does the opposite. A healthy sexual relationship affirms agency and dignity within the vulnerability of desire.

There is a spectrum of inappropriate harassment. Al Franken’s grope and Matt Lauer’s locked door are different. But everything along the scale communicates the same message: I have the power to lock you down, the power to make you the object I want. It is terrifying and humiliating.

Read more

Vatican Bank official removed
La Croix reports that the Institute for Religious Works (IOR), commonly known as the "Vatican Bank," has launched an internal probe into the activities of its former deputy director general, Giulio Mattietti. The official was dismissed on November 27.

His sudden removal from the IOR was to ensure he does not remove documents, well-informed sources told the Italian news agency ANSA. The investigation will focus on those documents and on his computer files, the sources said. Mattietti's office at the institute has been closed, but not sealed off.

Vatican spokeswoman Paloma Garcia Ovejero confirmed on November 29 that Mattietti had been dismissed but did not give any reasons for his removal. Mattietti was appointed deputy in November 2015 along with Director General Gian Franco Mammi and after a successful career had been tipped for the top job.

The sources also claimed another IOR staffer was also sacked recently, ANSA said.

On June 20, the Vatican announced the surprise resignation of Italian layperson Libero Milone who was appointed Auditor General of the Holy See just two years earlier.

Read more

Correction: Fr. Bryan Massingale considers what
Jesuit Bryan Massingale knows that dealing with the reality of racism in the United States is not easy. If it were, we would be well on our way to a more just world. But to have an honest, adult conversation about race, people might need to feel uncomfortable—embarrassed, ashamed, fearful, angry, overwhelmed, helpless and/or paralyzed—because there are few issues that grip and affect us emotionally more than the issue of race.

What ought to be the Ignatian contribution to the fight for racial justice, given our mission and our values? We start by looking at “the signs of the times,” that phrase from the Second Vatican Council that reminded theologians and church leaders that if we are to speak with credibility and effectiveness to our world, we have to ground ourselves in what is really going on.

A good place to start is by looking at our world through the lens of the college students who will graduate this spring as the class of 2018. What has been the experience of this senior class, and our country, when examined through the lens of race?

When the class of 2018 were first-year students, buying their school supplies, packing up their belongings and moving into residence halls in August of their freshman year, Michael Brown
Jr. was killed on the streets of Ferguson, Mo. That summer ignited a series of protests, epitomized by the slogan “Hands up. Don’t shoot.” But Michael Brown was simply one of many—all too many—people who were killed: unarmed African-Americans, men and women, killed for doing nothing except shopping in a mall, ringing a doorbell in the middle of the night to ask for help, or sitting on a playground swing and playing with a toy gun.

Read More

Why Sacramental Rigorism Fails

Cathleen Kaveny argues that many conservative Catholics remain opposed to relaxing the canonical prohibition against granting Communion to the divorced and civilly remarried. And many progressive Catholics perceive their more conservative counterparts as caring more about abstract legal rules than flesh-and-blood human beings.

In my view, however, this particular perception is misplaced. Most Catholics who oppose relaxing the rules on Communion are neither heartless nor unmerciful. They think that a more lenient practice is inconsistent with Jesus’ words in the gospels—a debatable point, and one on which many scholars disagree. But more than biblical interpretation shapes the approach of such conservatives.

They also believe the best way for the church to help weak and
sinful human beings flourish in the long run is to hold the line on the canonical prohibition. This belief also needs to be challenged, because it rests on an unrealistic notion of the power of legal norms, including canonical norms.

As I understand the conservative Catholic case, it runs like this. Lifelong marital commitment increases one’s chances of personal happiness.

Perseverance during the tough times is difficult but essential; studies show that most married couples who weather their storms find themselves in a better place in a few years’ time. The canonical prohibition has a carrot; it promotes the blessings of a lifelong sacramental union. But it also seems to have a stick—the threat of denying Communion incentivizes married couples to stick it out.

In the view of conservative Catholics, while the prohibition may appear cruel, it is actually kind. They admit that a few tragic cases may slip through the canonical cracks. Read more

**African-American Catholics are the future**

As an African-American Catholic, I often feel like the unnamed black man from Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man, present but not really seen.

I was raised steeped in Catholicism—from my name, Mary Cecelia, to my education. I
grew up in Maryland in the 1960s and '70s. I attended the now-shuttered St. Pius V Catholic School, where I was taught by teachers from the Oblate Sisters of Providence, an order founded in 1829 to educate and care for African-American children. I wore my faith proudly, even when the bonds of it were strained. When my classmates and I got the side-eye from the white Catholic school kids at citywide field day games held in Patterson Park, or when some members of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul at the predominantly white Seton High attributed my high test scores to divine intervention rather than intellect, I remained proud of both my heritage and my faith.

My Catholic education continued at Fordham University, where the Jesuits offered a fine education. It was at Fordham where I met my husband, and though he has strayed from the fold, our son would not have been baptized in any other faith.

Does signing a petition supporting the Pope help?

In October, Anthony Ruff wrote a thoughtful article about the petition that is circulating supporting Pope Francis.

Ruff writes that a petition in support of Pope Francis has arisen from the Czech Republic and Austria and is now circling the globe.
Is this a constructive way to promote discussion and dialogue in the Church? If one supports Pope Francis, should one sign the petition?

I admit that I’m a bit uneasy with this thing. It feels to me more like competition than dialogue. I fear it becoming a proxy war, but at the wrong level. Discernment in the Church happens at the level of the hierarchy, which of course we hope is deeply in touch with the entire People of God including lay people, clergy, religious, and theologians. (The Middle Ages had it right when they held that the magisterium consists of those who teach – bishops and theologians.) What is the real meaning of a petition, and what value does it derive from having more rather than less signatories?

Massimo Faggioli stated on social media why he did not sign:

I understand the temptation to sign it, but it’s ecclesiologically wrong and ecclesially-politically misguided. The Catholic Church is a Church of reception, not of petitions (right or left, conservative or liberal).

And this:

“They” need to count how few they are, “we” do not need to do that.

But Joseph S. O’Leary responded:

This is a subtle point of
ecclesiology. Offhand I can’t think why petitions should not be part of church life. The citizens of Ghent addressed petitions to Julius II and Leo X. A glance at Google indicates the Jews, and the citizens of Bologna, addressed petitions to the pope. No doubt many individuals and groups have petitioned the pope with various requests. ...It’s hard to see why even this should be an ecclesiological no-no.

When asked whether the pope really has any need of such a petition, co-organizer Fr. Paul Zulehner of Vienna said this to katholische.de

Asztrik Várszegi, archabbot of Pannonhalma and also a bishop, told us that of course he would sign – although he finds it very regrettable that such a thing is even necessary.

And I feel a bit the same way.

On the other hand, we know from the pope himself that he loves pluralism and the open exchange of opinions and does not suppress them. In this light, the engagement that we want is absolutely creative for the life of the Church.

Asked about the aim of the petition, Zulehner said this: I don’t know what will come from this. But I sure am amazed at how quickly it is going. That in just a few days, so much fire has flamed up, so to speak. This says that the ground was already very dry and ready to burn. The detail of how many people it will ultimately be is probably not really so important.
In any case, we will gain unbelievably many supporters. If it continues as now, I foresee over 10,000. And the media will not be able to ignore this. "Radio Vatican" has already reported on it.

I suppose this petition has a bit of official recognition in that seven bishops have signed it: Beer, Vac, Hungary; Dowling, Rustenberg, South Africa; Iby, Eisenstadt, Austria (retired); Krätzl, Vienna (auxiliary); Lobinger, North-Aliwal, South Africa (retired); Malý, Prague (retired); Várszegi OSB, titular bishop and Benedictine abbot of Pannonhalma, Hungary.

I haven’t signed. If enough bishops and superiors and mainline theologians sign on, will I reconsider? I don’t know. But I’m not there yet.

Read more

**Burlington, VT diocese plans first synod since 1962**

The Bennington Banner reports that Burlington Bishop Christopher J. Coyne has announced plans to convene the first diocesan synod in Vermont since 1962.

Its purpose is to establish a pastoral plan for the immediate future of the Catholic Church in Vermont and to establish particular laws and policies to do so. This will be at least a yearlong project and is "a serious undertaking by the Church," he said. "It is not a simple convening of meetings."

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington serves a population of
There are 65 active priests (45 diocesan and 20 religious order or extern) and 43 permanent deacons ministering in 73 parishes and 23 missions. The diocese includes 14 Catholic schools (including St. Therese Digital Academy) and a catechetical system with an estimated 4,700 students. Through Vermont Catholic Charities' social services and homes for the aged, the Diocese of Burlington assisted more than 6,000 Vermonters last year.

The bishop will serve as the convener and presider of the synod, and membership will contain both ex-officio members of the clergy and laity as well as representatives of religious communities, lay fraternities and at-large representation such as young people, parents and minority communities.

Are you interested in being a part of the synod? Consider contacting to Bishop Coyne on the website at: [http://bishopcoyne.org/](http://bishopcoyne.org/)

The French agree, God does not throw banana peels in front of people to see if they will slip

It took the French church decades of theological debate, years of waiting and a few days of last-minute controversy to change one phrase in its translation of the classic prayer "Our Father."

French Catholics finally went ahead with it Dec. 3, the first Sunday of Advent, and
Massgoers said, "Let us not enter into temptation," rather than the original wording, "Do not submit us to temptation," chosen after the Second Vatican Council.

In the end, the switch went relatively smoothly, even if some parishioners mumbled the wrong phrase. But it came only after both long discussions about the translation and delays due to the word-for-word wrangling with Rome over other liturgical translations.

As has happened with several other language groups, French bishops are still working on a new translation of the Roman Missal — the book of liturgical prayers that priests use — after Vatican officials said their 2007 translation was not close enough to the Latin original.

Pope Francis' recent loosening of the tight translation guidelines laid down in the 2001 Vatican instruction Liturgiam Authenticam have prompted English- and German-speaking Catholics to consider going back to earlier translations. The issue was never as contentious in French, which is based on Latin, but some changes may be made. On Sunday, many parishes passed out sheets containing the new French text, with the changed words in bold, to help hesitant parishioners along.

At Saint-Ignace, the Jesuit church in Paris, the new wording was written across a large banner for all to see.

Fr. Emmanuel Schwab, pastor of Saint-Léon Parish in Paris,
"The version 'do not submit us to temptation' made some people think God threw banana peels in front of people to see if they would slip and fall, but that is absolutely not the biblical view of God," he said after Mass.

**Guadalupe continues to influence America**

Nicole Flores writes that the range of values and visions mapped onto Our Lady of Guadalupe reveals her contested meaning for Catholicism, culture and the common good.

As I was growing up in a Mexican-American family, Guadalupe was everywhere, but most notably in the face of my grandmother, María Guadalupe García Flores. A humble woman without much formal education, her faith guided her as she raised 12 children amid immense poverty in rural Nebraska. My grandmother embodied a distinctly Guadalupan presence: prayerful, patient, joyful and strong. Whether nurturing a child, a friendship or a garden, she knew how to help things grow.

In her habits of magnifying the Lord and lifting up the lowly, she emulated Guadalupe by illuminating God's pervasive beauty and good news to the poor. It was my grandmother’s...
witness to beauty and justice that led to my own fascination with Guadalupe. Beginning with the presentation I made in seventh grade about my family’s history and continuing in my academic research in theology and ethics, I have longed to know more about my grandmother’s namesake and what her symbol means for the church and the world. Read more

More women are sharing their stories of being called to the diaconate. Share your story at our 100 Women Deacons campaign!

You won't want to miss these FutureChurch events!

Please support this work!

Be inspired! Catholic Women Preach!

Please support this effort!
Add your name to our 100 women deacons list!

Start a conversation with DeaconChat

Write a letter to our U.S. cardinals asking them to support Cardinal Anders Arborelius’ idea of a College of Women advisors to Pope Francis

Honor the Mary of Magdala in your life by having her name added to our list on Catholic Women Preach!

Learn what you can do to save your parish community

New! International priests statistics!

U.S. Priest statistics

Get the latest scholarship on the role of early Christian women by Christine Schenk, CSJ. Receive a copy of Crispina and Her Sisters when you donate $125 or more to FutureChurch!

Crispina and Her Sisters will open your eyes to the role women played in the shaping and expanding Christianity

As co-founder of FutureChurch, Christine Schenk, CSJ spent decades researching and writing
about women in early Christianity. Like many feminists who have recovered the history and importance of women's authority, ministry and leadership in early Christianity, Schenk's book, *Crispina and Her Sisters* unearths new evidence that women held prominent roles in shaping and spreading Christianity. The book has already received accolades from prominent scholars such as Gary Macy, Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, and Joan Chittister, OSB.

The book will be released on December 15. **FutureChurch will be offering a free copy of Chris's book for a donation of $125 or more.** Learn about women in early Christianity and support FutureChurch at the same time.

**Opportunities from our friends**