Ad Limina outreach: Some Bishops Open to Dialogue, (Others, Not So Much!)

By the end of the U.S. Bishops’ every five year ad limina visits to Rome (May 2012), over 400 concerned Catholics had contacted 42 dioceses to discuss the severity of the priest shortage, married priests and women deacons. One heartfelt letter from Catholics in a New England diocese was typical:

I am writing on behalf of myself and three other faithful friends of the church to request an appointment to discuss our concerns about local parishes and staffing in our diocese. We have dwindling numbers of priests. We have seen vibrant parishes closing, or being merged while our overworked priests struggle to effectively manage our parishes.

We have record numbers of people leaving the Catholic faith for various reasons. It is difficult to sit idly by and watch these trends and not take any action. We would like to discuss the future of our Catholic sacramental life and specifically what some of the possible solutions might be in addressing these issues.

All told, faithful Catholics, including the above-named New Englanders, succeeded in obtaining meetings in seventeen dioceses. Of these, twelve were held with bishop ordinaries and five with the chancellor or other official representing the bishop. All meetings were cordial and most lasted about an hour.

Optional celibacy discussion outcomes. Six bishops expressed openness to dialogue about optional celibacy with three favoring it and three willing to talk about it. Only one bishop, however was willing to discuss optional celibacy at his Rome ad limina visit. Five bishops and three diocesan officials appeared closed to any consideration of optional celibacy as a way to address the shortage of priests.

Here is a sampling of responses from bishops about optional celibacy:

• Our bishop is sure it will happen, but doesn’t believe he’ll live to see it.
• The bishop was not supportive of a married clergy because it would be too expensive to support a married priest and his wife and family.
• I invite you to join me for our monthly prayer for vocations and for continued prayers for each of our 22 seminarians in formation.

Women deacon discussion outcomes. Substantially more bishops, eleven to be exact, expressed some level of openness to dialogue about women deacons with six favoring it, and five willing to discuss it, Three expressed willingness to suggest the desirability of extending the diaconate to women in Rome. One bishop and one diocesan official registered no support for women deacons.

Here is a sampling of responses from bishops about women deacons:

• The bishop is open to the reinstatement of ordaining female deacons and is willing to discuss this during his ad limina visit.
• Our bishop has already agreed to take the issue of women deacons to Rome.
• Our bishop said he will consider the possibility if it can be shown that early women were ordained.
• An argument for establishing an order of deaconesses based on ancient precedence and practice is, at best, dubious.

Of the twenty-five dioceses where no meeting occurred at all, six bishops cited time constraints suggesting meeting at a later time and/or providing other avenues for conveying information. Five bishops categorically refused to meet and eleven did not respond at all to phone or written correspondence.

All in all, the efforts and meetings represent a good start. That said, it is quite distressing that of 42 good faith attempts on the part of loyal Catholics to reach out to U.S. Bishops about a matter of grave concern for the future of Catholic sacramental life, 16 bishops either did not respond (11) or categorically refused to meet (5).

This outreach effort could have been considerably more successful had we known in advance the planned dates for the U.S. ad limina visits. This was not widely available until a few months before the New England regions began meetings. Ad limina visits to Rome normally occur every five years, though for this last set of visits, the interim was seven years.

The 2012 experience can help FutureChurch and like-minded organizations prepare more effectively to engage bishops on key problems facing the church in 2016 and 2017. Bishops may be more willing then to engage in dialog because the next five years will move the US Church closer to the looming priest retirement cliff.
Dear Friends,

I want to fill you in a bit about my decision to step down as founding director of FutureChurch effective, God willing, in September 2013.

It has long been a concern of mine to have the transition from FutureChurch’s founding director [me], to occur at a time of organizational strength and in a planned way. I have been thinking for the past 4-5 years about when to make this change, and came to clarity about it in August 2011.

I believe the time is now ripe for that transition to occur. We have a strong national board, a great staff, our finances are stable and we are experiencing significant success in our programmatic endeavors, especially the parish appeal victories and the amazing expansion of our St. Mary of Magdala celebrations. Among the personal reasons for my desire to make this change now is that I have a book waiting in the wings that I am looking forward to completing.

The Executive Committee of the Board spent much of last year preparing a succession plan. We now have a national search committee hailing from Irvine, CA, Princeton, NJ, Manhattan, NY as well as Cleveland, OH. They hope to have interviews completed in the spring.

My love and support for the FutureChurch mission will continue. The Board and the new Executive Director will determine how I might best be of service.

Be assured that we will keep you posted as the process unfolds. Fresh leadership will bring creativity, new energy and long-term sustainability to our FutureChurch mission. In short, we are creating a great future for FutureChurch!

If you know someone who would be an appropriate choice for this important work please encourage them to apply. Visit www.futurechurch.org to download the position description.

With great gratitude for God’s faithfulness…and yours,

Chris Schenk CSJ, Executive Director

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**FutureChurch, Financial Review**

**For the Year Ended June 30, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Support and Revenues:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Grants</td>
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<td>Revenues</td>
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<td>(56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Public Support and Revenues</strong></td>
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</table>

**Expenses:**

| Personnel Costs            | 161,516 |
| Office and Administrative  | 16,907  |
| Occupancy                  | 14,723  |
| Postage and Printing and Development | 38,702 |
| Travel                     | 3,266   |
| Program and Education Resources | 15,314 |
| Newsletter and Marketing   | 8,800   |
| **Total Expenses**         | 259,228 |

| Change in Net Assets        | (2,629) |
| Net Assets Beginning of Year| 102,306 |

**Net Assets End of Year** | $ 99,677 |
Magdala Celebrations Inspire, Encourage

2012 was a great year for the Mary of Magdala celebrations. This year’s nearly 400 services focused not only on the witness and history of St. Mary of Magdala but on the history of women leaders in the Catholic Church and advocating for a return to the tradition of ordaining women deacons.

In over 16 countries thousands gathered for prayer services, films, formal and informal presentations, discussion groups, meals and even traditional sung Vespers. The celebrations ranged from a few friends meeting in a home to hundreds gathered in their parish church. Working to “End the Silencing of Catholic Women,” Catholics in the United States joined their voices with those in Australia, Belize, Canada, Chile, Colombia, England, India, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Scotland, Singapore, Uganda and Zambia.

Many chose to celebrate the prophetic witness of women religious in the tradition of Mary of Magdala. Prayer resources encouraging support for U.S. nuns were adapted from the 2010 Magdala Celebration and posted to FutureChurch.org and NunJustice.org.

Hundreds of individuals and groups make these celebrations possible each year. At least ten Call To Action, four Dignity, and two Pax Christi chapters, as well as groups from Voice of the Faithful, Women’s Ordination Conference, and Catholic Worker organized services. The National Catholic Reporter covered the Cleveland celebration which appeared on its website on July 24th.

Here are a Few Highlights:

Albany, NY July 23 Over 80 people were in attendance and participated in the 2012 Mary of Magdala celebration in honor of women’s roles in the Church. MaryAnn Louison of Amsterdamed presented a moving homily. CTA of NYS Capital District sponsored the celebration. Pictures and video are available at http://www.cta-nys.org/. The “Table of Honor” was full of artifacts brought by members and friends. These held special spiritual significance to individuals who shared their stories by writing information on cards placed next to each one.

Cincinnati, OH July 22 Sisters of many area Congregations, along with Associates and friends gathered in the Motherhouse Chapel on July 22 for a prayer service honoring Mary of Magdala, known as “Apostle to the Apostles” for her witness and fidelity. Sister of Charity Mary Ann Flannery, director of the Jesuit Retreat House in Cleveland, Ohio, was the reflector. This, the 16th year of the event, celebrated the prophetic witness of women religious. Each Sister present was given a long-stemmed rose during the service as an expression of affection and encouragement.

Colombia, South America July 18, 22, and 24 Catholics and other Christians gathered at three ecumenical celebrations of the feast day, one held in Soacha on July 18, one in Bogota on July 22 and the last in Cali on July 24.

Corona, CA July 21 The St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Community sponsored a family focused day at the El Cerrito Sports Park for their third celebration of the feastday. 175 people gathered for a bilingual service, followed by children’s games and refreshments. Utilizing materials provided by FutureChurch, the community sought to shed light on the historical Mary of Magdala.

Gainesville, FL July 23 A Prayer Service Celebrating the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala and Honoring Our Women Religious was held at St. Augustine’s Parish and Catholic Student Center in Gainesville. Seventy-five people gathered to hear about Mary Magdalene as a model witness for consecrated religious women and featured names of many sisters who have ministered in the Gainesville area and at the Student Center. This Twelfth Annual Mary Magdala Celebration was organized by the members of the St. Augustine’s Women’s Book Group. The Gainesville Sun published a feature article about the event.

Hampton Bays, NY August 22 Over 100 participants gathered at St. Rosalie’s Parish Center for a bilingual service celebrating women religious. Several sisters were involved, with three offering reflections on the gospel and nine others speaking about their lifetime of ministry. Each received a kiss and flower, and plenty of applause! Highlighting the giftedness of the next generation, a “small girls” choir of 6-8 year olds led the assembly in song.

Manhattan, NY On July 20, a moving celebration was held in the main sanctuary of our parish. The service concentrated on “naming” the negative and positive images/names given to women in the Gospels. During the first ritual each wrote a negative name in sand, received an embrace from another person, then wiped the word away. The second ritual involved inscribing our true name on a nametag and what the positive “I am” is, relating it to God = I AM. One speaker spoke of healing from negative names he had been called as a boy and young gay adult. The second speaker was a wise nun who spoke about Vatican II, the positive work of nun’s with the marginalized and issues around LCWR. People were very moved by the service.

Memphis, TN July 21-22 On Saturday, July 21, thirty-nine women and men participated in a prayer service and luncheon honoring Catholic sisters who have faithfully given their lives to serve Christ and his people. The eleven sisters in attendance gave witness talks that provided an opportunity to appreciate the work God is doing through them. On Sunday, July 22, the film “Women & Spirit” was shown after all Masses.

New York, NY July 21 This year a small prayer group that meets regularly to chant Vespers in Latin in Gregorian chant decided to be a part of FutureChurch’s Mary Magdalene observance. Praying in a private home and using their own more traditional materials, their service testified to their awareness of history and their concern for the future of women in the Church. Their service gave a unique witness praying in a private home and using their own more traditional materials.

More highlights are available at www.futurechurch.org.
Two Catholic nuns, one a canon lawyer, the other a popular author and biblical scholar, were in Cleveland on Sunday September 30 for a unique FutureChurch event focusing on women leaders in early Christianity even as the organization honored a Catholic woman leader from today.

Nearly 200 curious guests learned about the life and times of Phoebe, a leader of the church at Cenchreae; Priscilla, a coworker in the Gospel with St. Paul; and Perpetua, a martyr whose prison diary is the first extant Christian writing by a woman. Well-known author and New Testament scholar, Sr. Carolyn Osiek, painted a picture of how women in the churches of the first generations lived and expressed their faith. Sr. Carolyn is a past president of the Catholic Biblical Association and co-author of many books including *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*. She is the academic expert for FutureChurch’s March 14-21 Rome pilgrimage to archaeological sites of early women leaders.

Canon Lawyer Sr. Kate Kuenstler PHJC, JCD was honored with FutureChurch’s Fr. Louis J. Trivison award. Over the past five years, Sr. Kate assisted parishioners from dozens of parishes in the U.S. and worldwide with canonical appeals to keep their churches open. She succeeded in winning cases at the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy and the Apostolic Signatura, the highest court in the Church. This finally led to a change in Vatican policy to one that now preserves churches as worship sites, making it less likely for bishops to close them solely because of the priest shortage or property values. The *Trivison Award* is named for FutureChurch cofounder, the late Fr. Louis J. Trivison. It is given in recognition of outstanding leadership in advancing the FutureChurch mission and vision.

**Benefit Honors Women Leaders of Yesterday, Today**

Since the launch of FutureChurch’s *Women Deacons: Why Not Now?* initiative last spring, scores of faithful Catholics have purchased or downloaded resource packets, and many others have signed up to help with local organizing. Over the past five years, FutureChurch’s Save Our Parish Community project catalyzed a landmark change in Vatican policy. We discovered that it IS possible to influence Rome once a critical mass decides to do something. Please help us create a new critical mass on behalf of women, especially women preachers, in our church.

Already Cardinal George has promised to raise the issue of women deacons in Rome after a Chicago parish asked him to support the candidacy of a woman leader to the permanent diaconate. We are aware of groups that have met or are meeting with bishops in three other U.S. dioceses. Using the Chicago parish as a model, our materials include how to educate in your parish and how to find and present women candidates to your bishop.

The packet contains everything you need to educate and advocate for ordaining women to the permanent diaconate in your parish, including essays and prayer services about early women deacons, and articles by experts such as Dr. Phyllis Zagano for how the Church can and should restore the female diaconate today.

**Join the movement today!** We hope to create local networks of people willing to work on this issue. Let us know if you are interested in becoming a local educator and/or activist in your diocese.

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**Help Create a Critical Mass for Women Deacons**

Visit www.futurechurch.org to order a packet with all printed resources. $10.00 (includes shipping) OR download a pdf version ($5.00)

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**Holy Week and Easter Packet**

Tested prayer resources put the women who stayed with Jesus from crucifixion to resurrection “back in the biblical picture.” Includes Woman’s Way of the Cross, PowerPoint CD and a Pentecost prayer service $15.00 at www.futurechurch.org

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**Order Today!**

**Women Deacons: Why Not Now?**

Visit www.futurechurch.org to order a packet with all printed resources. $10.00 (includes shipping) OR download a pdf version ($5.00)

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Our US Postal PAPER newsletter is now being printed just two or three times each year. Please sign up TODAY for our in depth monthly E-Newsletter at www.futurechurch.org
Parish Closing and Appeals Round-up

**Parish vigil hits eight years.** On Friday October 25, parishioners at St. Frances X. Cabrini in Scituate, MA celebrated a dubious eight-year anniversary of continuous vigil in a church the Archdiocese of Boston has been trying to close since Oct. 26, 2004. The building has been occupied 24/7 by parishioners who say they built it, paid for it, and it belongs to them (Boston Globe 10/20/12).

**Boston cardinal approves plan that keeps parishes intact.** Cardinal Sean O’Malley on Thursday approved a plan that aims to stabilize the Boston Archdiocese’s declining finances by combining its 288 parishes into 135 clusters that share staffing and resources. The number of available priests will plummet from 316 in 2011 to 178 in 2021; only 17 percent of local Catholics now attend Mass. Boston’s plan is being watched closely as other dioceses around the country conduct their own reconfiguration plans (Associated Press 10/15/12). (Editor’s note: Boston’s new plan is being watched closely as other dioceses around the country create their own reconfiguration plans)

**Vatican urges parishioners to seek church lawyer.** Monsignor Antonio Neri, undersecretary of the Congregation for Clergy, has written parishioners of St. John the Baptist Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts telling them to seek a canon lawyer and make a formal claim to keep their parish open. Parishioners are opposing Fall River bishop George Coleman’s March announcement that he would close the church (South Coast Today 10/10/12).

**Last of eleven victorious Cleveland parishes reopens.** “We are now on the road to reconstruction,” said Cleveland St. Emeric parishioner and church organist Miklos Peller at the parish’s November 4 opening Mass. Along with ten other parishioners Peller had filed a successful appeal to the Vatican after Cleveland Bishop Richard Lennon announced in March 2009 that he was closing dozens of churches. Even after winning their appeal Lennon initially denied St. Emeric parishioner requests to reinstate their Hungarian speaking pastor, Rev. Sandor Siklodi. Siklodi was finally reinstated but only after parishioners again appealed to Rome (Cleveland Plain Dealer 11/5/12).

**Closed church to have Mass again.** On December first, the doors of St. Patrick’s Church in Chicopee, MA reopened to worshipers again. Father Darisuz P. Wudarski, the Pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Chicopee announced in mid-November, that St. Patrick’s would re-open for a single weekly Mass starting at the beginning of Advent. A group of parishioners launched a successful appeal to the Vatican after Springfield Bishop Timothy McDonnell closed the church in 2009 (WWLP Television 11/14/12).

**St. Peter Church reopens but Community stays in rented space.** On Sunday September 9, after the Vatican upheld parishioner appeals, St. Peter Church in downtown Cleveland reopened its doors. But most members of the original congregation stayed away. More than 350 members of the St. Peter Community along with their pastor Fr. Robert Marrone, had refused to disband when Bishop Richard Lennon dissolved the parish in 2010. Instead they moved to nearby commercial space to continue worshipping and ministering in the city. By all accounts, the new Community of St. Peter is flourishing and now numbers over 450. Members express little inclination to return to the original church without Marrone who had been threatened with suspension by Lennon (Cleveland Plain Dealer 9/9/2012).

**Belgium diocese will shrink 300 parishes to 70** Bishop Joahn Bonny of Antwerp recently announced a five year action plan that includes consolidate the dioceses 300 parishes into 70, searching for priests “from abroad,” and hiring more paid lay staff (The Tablet 11/2/12).

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☐ $________ MONTHLY

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Address ________________________________ City ______________ State_________ Zip_________

Email ________________________________ ☐ Please do not share my name with any other organization.

☐ My check payable to FutureChurch is enclosed. ☐ Please charge my  
MASTERCARD  VISAP  DISCOVER  (circle one)

Card # ________________________________ Exp. Date ___________ 3 Digit Security Code (on back of card) ___________

Signature ________________________________

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Donations and Memberships can be processed via the Internet.  
Go to www.futurechurch.org - Click on Join and then Apply Online.
Bourgeois dismissal sparks landmark statements of support. In October, apparently over objections from Maryknoll leadership, the Vatican expelled Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois from the priesthood. Bourgeois’s dismissal sparked widespread public support. On December 3, the National Catholic Reporter published a landmark editorial formally calling for an end to the unjust practice of excluding women from the Catholic priesthood: “Our message is that we believe the sensus fidelium is that the exclusion of women from the priesthood has no strong basis in Scripture or any other compelling rationale; therefore, women should be ordained.”

On December 7, Ireland’s Association of Catholic Priests called on the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith “to cease this type of abuse, to restore Fr. Bourgeois to the full exercise of his ministry and to allow for open and honest discussion on issues that are of crucial importance for the future of the Church” (National Catholic Reporter 12/7/12). Send letters of support to Fr. Roy: SOA Watch, PO Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903.

Milwaukee priest, 92, sanctioned. A 92-year-old Milwaukee Jesuit, Fr. Bill Brennan, was sanctioned for celebrating Mass with a woman priest. Brennan, a longtime peace activist, was ordered by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Society of Jesus, not to celebrate the Eucharist or other sacraments publicly. “Sometimes in our lives we have to trust our conscience and bring about the consequences,” said Brennan (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 12/4/12). Send letters of support to Fr. Bill: 10100 West Bluemound Rd., Wauwatosa, WI 53226.

Vatileaks: Papal butler knew only Italian The pope’s butler, Paolo Gabriele, now serving an 18-month sentence, knew only Italian even though many documents he smuggled were written in other languages. Investigators found 82 cases containing “thousands and thousands” of documents, crammed into Gabriele’s home. These facts led the well-respected British journal The Tablet to note a “continuing suspicion that [Gabriele] may have been part of a wider conspiracy.” In early December the Vatican announced new security measures including employee ID cards with microchips to track where each employee is at any given time (The Tablet 10/13/12 and Catholic News Service 12/3/12).

Priests, people oppose Vienna plan to close 75 percent of parishes. In mid-October, The Archdiocese of Vienna announced it plans to merge 660 parishes into about 150 over the next five years. Three to five priests will staff each larger parish and celebrate Mass regularly. Msgr. Helmut Schüller, a founder of the Austrian Priests’ Initiative, strongly criticized the plan: “We are withdrawing from our local parish churches instead of strengthening them. In large parishes which cover extensive geographical areas, many of our parishioners will feel lost and go astray.” Schüller formerly served as vicar-general for Vienna’s Cardinal Schönborn. According to a national poll, 86 percent of Austrians see downsizing as “problematic” (National Catholic Reporter 10/8/2012 and Catholic Herald, Co, UK 10/18/12).

Austria: ‘Cold war’ between priests and the Vatican. The Vatican’s recent decision to revoke Mgr. Helmut Schueller’s title of Monsignor comes just as the Austrian priest movement prepares for a big international event. The meeting is expected to take place in 2013 and groups of priests from Germany, Ireland, France, the U.S. and Australia who have links with the Pfarrer Initiative, (“Call to Disobedience”) have already expressed their interest in attending. Schueller explained that 2013 is going to be “a year of internationalization for the movement and a congress will probably be held in Germany” (Vatican Insider 11/30/12).

Fewer men considering priesthood; mandatory celibacy a deterrent. In a survey of Catholics 14 and older, about 12 percent of males said they had considered a religious vocation at least “a little seriously.” At first glance, the recent study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University would seem positive. However, compared to previous studies conducted by CARA, the percentage of men considering priesthood is declining. In 2003, twenty percent reported considering priestly vocation. This dropped to 17 percent in 2008. In the newest study, of the men who never considered a priestly vocation, 55 percent identified the desire to have children and 49 percent identified the celibacy requirement as deterrents (Full survey available at cara.georgetown.edu/).

Canon Law leaders predict major shift in parish/diocesan systems. At an October meeting of over 350 canon lawyers, Msgr. Roch Page, judicial vicar of the Canadian Appeal Tribunal of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, predicted an evolution in the theology of the laity and believes increased lay participation will bring major change to priestly ministry and parish and diocesan systems. The 2012 Official Catholic Directory reports 40,000 lay ministers serve the U.S. church today. “The church depends tremendously on lay ministers,” said Franciscan Sister Katarina Schuth, who also spoke at the conference (Catholic News Service 10/17/12).

Cardinal O’Malley turning Boston Archdiocese around. In 2002, the Boston archdiocese was borrowing money from their pension funds and the Knights of Columbus to pay for clergy sex abuse settlements. The archdiocese was regularly posting $15 million annual deficits in the operating budget. But in 2012, under Cardinal O’Malley’s leadership, the Knights’ loan has been paid off and the operating budget is balanced. Further, the clergy retirement fund for the first time posted a surplus in of $500,000 replacing the $10 million annual deficit of former years (The Tablet November 24, 2012).

ORGANIZE TO KEEP PARISHES OPEN!
DOWNLOAD A FREE CRISIS KIT
ORDER the SAVE OUR PARISH COMMUNITY packet at: WWW.FUTURECHURCH.ORG
Thousands Support the Sisters

As of mid December at least 3000 people had pledged to send paper Christmas cards to the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, in support of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an umbrella organization representing 80 percent of all U.S. nuns. More than 2000 had pledged to communicate via web messages or Christmas cards with the three-bishop team delegated to implement a Vatican mandate against LCWR issued last April. Currently LCWR leadership is engaged in “cordial” dialogue with Archbishop Peter Sartain about contemporary religious life and what it means in the 21st century.

LCWR leadership was recently named as the 2013 recipient of the prestigious Herbert Haag prize for Freedom in the Church. It was given in recognition of U.S. sisters’ service to the poor and their “careful reflection of the signs of the times in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.”

Sisters Give Own Views on Visitation

Women leaders of U.S. Sisters recently released early results of a study designed to garner feedback about their experience of the Vatican’s 2009 Apostolic Visitation. “I think as a group, we had a really deep desire to enable women religious to speak in their own voice collectively,” said St. Joseph of Carondelet Sr. Jean Wincek.

A question toward the end of the survey asked the communities what they would highlight if they were to write the story of the experience. For Congregation of St. Joseph Sr. Nancy Conway, the powerful message was how many times communities answered with their hope that the story would talk about their fidelity to their mission and integrity in their religious identity. “It’s not a story about who [has done] us wrong. It’s a story of who we really are. That’s what we wanted to get out there.”

The group plans to publish a book about the report, “The Apostolic Visitation as Experienced by U.S. Women Religious.” The fourth and final phase of the Vatican’s Apostolic Visitation has yet to be announced (National Catholic Reporter 10/12/12).

Priesthood Sunday 2012 a Success!

This fall hundreds of Catholics gathered to thank their parish priests and at the same time pray for a return to the tradition of a married priesthood and women deacons in the Latin rite of the Roman Catholic Church.

Here is a heartwarming story from Auburn, NY where parishioners put together a ‘surprise’ celebration for their pastor. They write:

After the Communion Prayer at each of the Masses the congregation raised their hands over their priest while a blessing was read. The words of the blessing were very moving and the congregation spontaneously burst into applause at each Mass. Parish children worked for two weeks coloring pictures to give. The little ones presented them individually at the Children’s Mass with each child expressing his or her love and gratitude, several by hugging our pastor’s legs (He is about 6ft 8!).

This celebration was one of at least 66 held in the US, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, and the Netherlands on or around October 28, Priesthood Sunday. Participants were encouraged to take action and advocate for a return of both married priests and women deacons. Many signed our Open Letter to U.S. Bishops and/or sent postcards or e-postcards to Cardinals Piacenza and Mueller in Rome. Of the organizers, 43 downloaded the 2012 Organizing Kit complete with prayer service and educational materials. We have details about 21 celebrations, 8 of which were held in Catholic parishes. Nine gatherings attracted had more than 100 participants. Although some celebration summaries and details may still be making their way to us, we are very pleased with the feedback we have received.

In 2013, Priesthood Sunday will be held on October 27.

Can a woman receive the sacrament of orders?
Order our A Million Voices resource Includes three part education program discussing Catholic teaching and the non-ordination of women. Visit www.futurechurch.org to download ($3.00) or order ($5.00).
CD of Georgetown debate ($8.00)

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief.
Do justly, now.
Love mercy, now.
Walk humbly, now.
You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

The Talmud
**A LOOK AHEAD**

**Wednesday, January 16, 2013. Columbus, Ohio.**
Women Officeholders in the Early Church, with Sr. Chris Schenk CSJ. 7 pm Maple Grove United Methodist Church (7 W Henderson Rd, Columbus, OH 43214). Contact tlupia@aol.com

**March 14-21, 2012 SOLD OUT!** Journey of Discovery: Pilgrimage to Archaeological Sites of Women Leaders in the Early Church. With Sr. Chris Schenk and Sr. Carolyn Osiek. SOLD OUT! If interested in a 2014 pilgrimage, email chris@futurechurch.org

**Monday, July 22, 2013.** International Celebrations of St. Mary of Magdala info and free resources at www.futurechurch.org

**Sunday October 27, 2013.** Annual International Celebration of Priesthood Sunday info and free resources at www.futurechurch.org

**November 8,9 and 10, 2013.** National Call To Action Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Info at www.cta-usa.org

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**WE’RE GOING TO ROME IN MARCH!**

**SEND YOUR POSTCARD TODAY!**

**FOR OPTIONAL CELIBACY AND WOMEN DEACONS**

We will hand deliver numbers of signers to the Vatican. Visit www.futurechurch.org to send e-postcards or order paper postcards.

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**SAVE THE TREES**

Please send an email to info@futurechurch.org to receive our FOCUS newsletter via email only. Put “FOCUS newsletter via email only” in the Subject line.

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**Quoteable Quote:**

“There is misogyny in the Church, it is a closed world caught up in power struggles. Many members of the clergy believe that if women are given roles in the Church, there will be less room for them.”

—Italian historian Lucetta Scaraffia. She is also a columnist for the Vatican daily L’Osservatore Romano

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**Sr Chris (center) and friends at CTA New York Thruway Tour, Buffalo Oct 7**

**Sr Chris (center) and friends at CTA**

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