FOCUS E-News
May 21 - 27, 2018 Edition

Please support FutureChurch during our Pentecost Campaign

THE 2018 MARY OF MAGDALA CELEBRATION RESOURCE IS READY!

Inspired by the global Women's Marches and aware that our religious institutions and the world are in dire need of an infusion of feminist energy and truth, our theme for 2018 is "Celebrating Feminism and Faith in Union." Find everything you will need to celebrate the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala in your community or parish.

Download 2018 resource

Download the 2018 Mary of Magdala Celebration Packet

URGE U.S. BISHOPS TO REFORM SEMINARY PROGRAMS

Recently the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) sent a letter to Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.SS.R. and the USCCB asking for a major overhaul of their programs for priestly formation. FutureChurch supports the AUSCP campaign and asks Catholics to contact Cardinal Tobin and the Committee to express their concerns.

Download resource

Sign the Open Letter to Pope Francis Urging More Effective Collaboration with Women

Sign the letter
Catholic Women Speak and Voices of Faith invite Catholic women to sign an open letter to Pope Francis urging him to collaborate more effectively with women and to use language that expresses the pressing need for full equality for women.

From the Executive Director

This week the editors of America Magazine urged bishops to consult widely with parishioners when massive parish closings and mergers are being considered. They believe the process used by the Pittsburg Diocese, where the diocese’s 188 parishes will be reduced to 57 by 2023, is a model process because parishioners there were consulted for a three year period.

The editors also suggest that Catholics themselves need to consider the need to move beyond the insularity of ethnic parishes toward a parish model that is attuned to today’s diverse culture. In effect, parishioners should consider the needs of the wider church looking beyond parochial boundaries.

These suggestions are worthy. Yet, missing from their message is a factor seldom discussed; the responsibility of Catholic bishops to consider how parish closings or mergers affect economically vulnerable communities or communities of color.

In Cleveland, FutureChurch helped spearhead a mapping project that compared the locations of closed parishes to the areas where people of color live and where poverty rates are exceedingly high. The picture that emerged was disturbing. In areas where poverty is widespread and people of color reside, there has been a disproportionate number of parish closings.

FutureChurch continues to offer resources for Catholics to a) save their parish communities, b) understand both their rights and responsibilities as parishioners, as well as, c) explore innovative models of parish and community life that are emerging today.

This is an exciting time to be a Catholic. Opportunities to follow the Spirit abound in our lives, our communities, and in our world. The Spirit of Pentecost is alive.

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director
Somehow, in some spheres and particularly in the church, “feminism” has become a bad word. But the reality is that generations of feminists have been working to affirm the full humanity and equality of women - and indeed all people - in every sphere of life. And while the work is still incomplete, feminists have made tremendous strides for the better in changing the way we live, move, and have being in our world. Indeed, feminism has helped us to live the gospel more fully in our world today.

I personally can’t – nor do I want to – imagine my life of faith without the gifts that feminism has given to me and continues to offer to the entire church today. As someone who finds life in helping others to pray, I am especially grateful that feminist theologians and liturgists have opened my eyes to new – and ancient – ways of naming and calling upon God. These new names and images have given me restorative ways of understanding God and myself in relationship with the Divine that are at the same time healing and challenging. And I hope that I do them justice whenever I sit down to write a prayer service or am asked to lead a group in reflection or prayer.

What gift or gifts that feminism has given to your life of faith are you thankful for? Perhaps it’s new ways of interpreting both scripture and history that put our foremothers in faith back in the picture... Or maybe feminism has helped you to see how concentrating power and authority – whether in church or society -- in one group of people hurts all people...

It is a cause for celebration that these gifts have enlivened your faith and mine! And it is encouraging to see the ways that they have been embraced in various parts of the Christian community, such as women’s prayer groups and Bible studies, the world of academia, and some small Christian communities and intentional communities. Yet we all know that the larger church is still in dire need of an infusion of feminist energy, spirit, and wisdom at every level so that everyone can benefit.

And that’s why this year’s theme for our Mary of Magdala Celebrations is “Celebrating Feminism and Faith in Union.” We invite you and your community to join us in this celebration. Join us in celebration of the women who have gone before us, in
solidarity with women and other marginalized people today whose
demands for justice and inclusion call us to conversion, and join us
in prayer and hope for our church that it might come more fully
alive with the gifts, spirit, and potential of all its members!

Download your planning resource at
https://www.futurechurch.org/2018-mary-of-magdala-celebration-
planning-resource.

Russ Petrus
Associate Director

Belgian Cardinal on Blessing Gay couples

Claire Lesegretain reported that Cardinal Jozef De Kesel of Malines-Brussels last week met with a small delegation from a local gay working group which had requested an audience.

Following the meeting, Cardinal De Kesel “expressed his concern for their well-being and conveyed his respect to them,” Geert De Kerpel, the Dutch-speaking spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels said on May 5.

In his effort to answer questions from the working group, “the cardinal also spoke of their relationships as couples, distinguishing these from Christian marriage between a man and a woman,” De Kerpel said.

“However, it does involve a personal encounter,” he said.

Cardinal De Kesel expressed his desire to answer the requests of believing gay couples who are involved in a stable and lasting relationship and who wish to benefit from a symbolic recognition by the church.

Pope Francis may have uttered words that will change the Church forever

Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA, is hopeful that Pope Francis’ recent words to Juan Carlos Cruz, a gay male survivor of clerical sexual abuse that his sexual orientation comes from God is the beginning of a real change in the Church’s teaching on sexuality and its treatment of LGBTQI people.

Juan Carlos Cruz said that in a private meeting about the Chilean sexual abuse scandal, Pope Francis said, “Look Juan Carlos, the pope loves you this way. God made you like this and he loves you.”

Duddy-Burke believes that Pope Francis’s reported affirmation of the divine origins of Juan Carlos Cruz’s sexual orientation could...
push the process that has until now relied on individual or small group conversations into hyperdrive. It would mean an end to exclusion from full access to the sacramental and communal life of the Catholic Church, and an end to Catholic officials’ opposition to human rights protections of LGBTQI people. Read more

**Time Report**
Pope to meet with more Chilean survivors

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**The Chilean Church fails**

Nicholas Seneze reports that the Chilean bishops announced their collective resignation last Friday following a series of sex abuse cases that have shaken the church. But far from ending the crisis, the decision heralds the beginning of a long rebuilding process in which Pope Francis will have a free hand to choose their successors.

After their week in Rome, Chile’s bishops have now returned to their dioceses. Despite submitting their resignations to Pope Francis they will remain in their posts until these are accepted.

In a few cases, Rome’s decision will probably not take long. In others, Pope Francis will need time to consider and perhaps study the various files.

Meanwhile, as a result of the shock caused by Friday’s events, new sex abuse cases have already begun to emerge. Over the weekend, a group of priests from Rancagua, south of Santiago, were accused of belonging to a vast network of abusers.

Bishop Alejandro Goic Karmelic of Rancagua reportedly first received these accusations 18 months ago. However, he took no action for lack of evidence despite presiding over the Chilean church commission responsible for fighting sexual abuse.

This weekend, he finally announced the suspension of 15 priests — nearly a quarter of the priests of the diocese! Read more

Chilean bishops thank media for their work

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**Cardinal says insisting on women as deacons or priests is grounds for excommunication**

The Tablet reports that Cardinal Walter Brandmüller has said that those who insist
upon the ordination of female priests or female deacons “fulfills the elements of heresy” the consequence of which is excommunication from the church. Cardinal Brandmüller, one of the four “dubia” cardinals, was responding to German politician, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbaue, who said on 10 May: “It is very clear: women have to take positions of leadership in the church.”

In a comment piece for the newspaper Die Tagespost, Cardinal Brandmüller writes that the question of female priests has been authoritatively ruled out by Pope John Paul II. As a result, anyone who insists upon this matter – including the ordination of female deacons - has not only “left the foundations of the Catholic faith” but “fulfils the elements of heresy which has, as its consequence, the exclusion from the Church – excommunication.”

Read more

Who are the 14 new cardinals?

The Tablet offers brief biographical notes about each of the 14 churchmen who will become cardinals June 29.

Their names are listed in the order Pope Francis announced them May 20:

-- Iraqi Cardinal-designate Louis Raphael I Sako, the Chaldean Catholic patriarch, was ordained a bishop eight months after the US invasion of Iraq. He witnessed the exodus of the country's native Christians and ministered to the beleaguered and martyred people who remained. After his installation as head of the Chaldean Catholic Church in 2013, he said the church must be a sign of hope, witness and communion, despite the difficulties, and work together with all Iraqis to defend human dignity and peaceful coexistence based on equal rights.

The 69-year-old cardinal-designate was born July 4, 1948, in Zakho. After studies in Mosul, Rome and Paris, he returned to Mosul in 1986 and served as pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish and, during the U.S.-led embargo of Iraq, he and several physicians and pharmacists opened a dispensary for the poor.

He was rector of the patriarchal seminary in Baghdad before the Chaldean bishops' synod elected him archbishop of Kirkuk in 2002 - an election approved by St. John Paul II in 2003. He was elected to lead the Chaldean Church in early 2013, and Pope Benedict XVI formally recognized the election soon after.

Iraq's Christian population, believed to number up to 1.4 million in the late 1990s, now is believed to be significantly fewer than 500,000. Almost two-thirds of Iraqi Christians belong to the
The Tablet Editors Say Francis is Locking Down Reforms with New Cardinals

In an editorial by The Tablet, those who oppose the papacy of Francis will have been dismayed by his announcement that he is naming 14 new cardinals, 11 of whom will be eligible to elect his successor. They include bishops from Iraq, Pakistan, Portugal, Peru, Madagascar and Japan – and the papal almoner, Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, who works among the poor people of Rome. They are all pastoral shepherds who know “the smell of the sheep”.

Francis has now created 47 per cent of the voting cardinals – those under 80 – which should more or less guarantee that the next pope will continue on the course this one has set.

NCR Editors: Francis Should Seize Moment

Recent weeks have seen several milestone events in the Catholic Church's decades long struggle to come to terms with the scandal of clergy sexual abuse and its cover-up by the hierarchy. The headline event was the mass resignation of the Chilean episcopate May 18. While at press time Pope Francis had not yet formally accepted any of the resignations and the full implications of the resignations are still being sorted out, the significance of the event cannot be in doubt.

Watching this incident unfold from January to May underscores the need for Francis to revisit the proposal he made in the summer of 2015 to establish a tribunal that would hold responsible bishops and religious superiors who mishandle cases of clergy sex abuse. At that time, we hailed this announcement, declaring, "Bishops who perpetuated and extended this scandal by covering up, dismissing or ignoring abuse are going to be held accountable." But we also warned that "an entrenched bureaucracy ruled by ancient customs of privilege and status" would resist such a tribunal.

A year later, Francis added to the list of "grave causes" for which a bishop could be removed from office "negligence of bishops in the exercise of their office, particularly relative to cases of sexual abuse against minors and vulnerable adults." That came in a papal document, Come Una Madre Amorevole ("Like a loving mother"), but there was no tribunal. The powers and duties envisioned the tribunal were realigned in a new document headed Menneskeværenget, "The Human Family". The original proposal was not mentioned.

But Francis included in a recent papal document, "As a Father and Shepherd," the duty of bishops to "promote and support processes of discernment, formation and training, fostering a culture of vocations and the spread of the Church's spirit," and, he added, "carefully consider the occasion and the responsibility to ordain new priests in the diocese". This may be a reference to the need for a cardinal-controlled council to vet potential bishops.

NCR editors have long advocated for such a independent council, noting "to hold bishops and religious superiors to account with regard to sexual misconduct, an overarching council would have to examine all complaints, a more equitable arrangement than the current "nuncio model". This model has been "failing the Church" for decades, we have argued, and the time has come for a new approach, starting with accountability for bishops involved in the "shameful record of clerical misconduct". It is time for Francis to accept that such an independent council is needed.
year before for a tribunal that could investigate and judge bishops and heads of religious communities for negligence causing "physical, moral, spiritual or patrimonial" harm were dissipated among "the competent congregation of the Roman Curia."

The spring and summer of 2015 saw the resignations of three U.S. bishops who had been implicated in civil courts for failing to report child abuse: Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri, and Archbishop John Nienstedt and Auxiliary Bishop Lee Piché of St. Paul-Minneapolis. Those resignations only came after years of public agitation by local Catholics, media attention and intense internal lobbying.

As dramatic as the resignations of the Chilean bishops are, the actual process for obtaining them differed little from the process that forced Finn, Nienstedt and Piché to resign. The church still has no system and no independent authority to investigate and hold accountable bishops and religious superiors who enable abuse. The shock of these mass resignations creates an opportunity and momentum that Francis should seize upon to implement the tribunal he proposed three years ago. No more delays. He should act now.

A version of this story appeared in the June 1-14, 2018 print issue under the headline: Pope should seize resignations’ momentum. Read more

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How to Engage Catholics Better When Closing Parishes

America Magazine Editors suggest a better way to close parishes.

They write that parish closures and mergers are painful, as anyone knows who has seen the doors close on the church where they were married or baptized as a child. Parishioners feel they have lost their spiritual homes. But too often, coverage of these plans fails to recognize the severe constraints dioceses confront. Many of these churches were built at a time when seminaries were full or when it made sense to have clusters of ethnic parishes serving waves of new immigrants. Today, the church does not have the personnel to staff these parishes or the resources to maintain their properties. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, in 1965 there were 1,289 parishioners per priest; that ratio is now 2,600 to 1; 20 percent of parishes lack a resident pastor, compared with 5 percent 50 years ago. Read more

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Australian archbishop is found guilty

Catholic Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide has been found guilty of failing to
inform police about allegations of child sexual abuse.

The Australian archbishop was accused by the Newcastle Magistrate’s Court on May 22 of covering up the abuse of then 10-year-old altar boy Peter Creigh by convicted pedophile and former priest Jim Fletcher near Newcastle, in the 1971.

Wilson was the assistant parish priest in East Maitland, New South Wales, at the time. Fletcher died in jail in 2006. Archbishop Wilson, 67, faces a maximum two-year jail term, with sentencing set to occur on June 19.

The guilty verdict makes Archbishop Wilson the most senior Catholic cleric in the world to be charged and convicted of covering up sexual abuse.

**Sr. Norma Pimentel receives award**

Carol Zimmerman reports that the University of Notre Dame graduates were asked May 21 to take stock of where they are going and what they will do with their talents.

"Today you have the opportunity to decide what you will be beyond this point. Will you say yes to God's plan in your life?" Sr. Normal Pimentel, recipient of the university's 2018 Laetare Medal, asked the university's graduating seniors.

Pimentel, a member of the Missionaries of Jesus, urged the graduates to think about what their response would be to the world "which needs you to make a difference and speak for the voiceless and help the voiceless have a voice." Read more

**The Pope's Rehab Program**

According to Robert Mickens, Pope Francis is rehabilitating a Church that seems bent on implosion.

He writes that it should be clear by now that those who are most scandalized and confused by Pope Francis are found within the ranks of the Catholic clergy and among laypeople with a clericalist mentality.
They judge the first pope to come from the New World and only Jesuit ever to be elected Bishop of Rome as unconventional and non-institutional, to say the least. And that has little to do with his place of birth or membership in the Church’s largest male religious order.

Francis, like the saint from Assisi whose name he chose upon election to the papacy, disturbs his clericalist critics because he is a radical disciple of Jesus Christ. In fact, he is perhaps the most radically evangelical pope since the earliest centuries of Christianity.

In the past five years he has tried to free the Catholic Church from its un-evangelical and stubborn attachment to (imploding) institutions and governing structures modeled on Imperial Rome, alliances with socio-political powers that use the Church as much as it uses them and an intellectual-juridical tradition that has seemed, at times, to be more closely tethered to Greco-Roman philosophies than to the Gospel itself. Read more.

LISTENING TO WOMEN
Join the Conversation!

Pentecost is a time when we open our hearts and minds to the movement of God's Spirit.

Today, women in the Church are looking for opportunities to express the fullness of God’s presence in them as human beings created in the image and likeness of God. Through Listening to Women, we a) create safe spaces where women can talk about the celebrations and challenges they experience as women in the Catholic Church; then b) share those reflections with our Bishops to help create opportunities for greater understanding and inclusion in Church life.

Learn more.

CATHOLIC WOMEN DEACONS RETREAT

Join us for our third retreat as Catholic women come together to discern and explore the call to the permanent diaconate!

**September 7 - 9, 2018**
Cleveland, Ohio

LEARN MORE
Donate $125 or more and receive a copy of Kaya Oakes book, *The Nones Are Alright: A New Generation of Believers, Seekers, and Those in Between*

**Start a conversation about women deacons with DeaconChat!**

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 as we celebrate the Spirit of Pentecost!

Be inspired! Catholic Women Preach!

Please support this effort!
Over 147,000 views! **PLEASE SUPPORT CATHOLIC WOMEN PREACH!**

Please take the **Catholic Women Preach** survey and help us to make this exciting initiative even better!

**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**

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