FOCUS E-News
August 6 - August 12, 2017 Edition

Honor an inspiring woman in your life!

Did you miss an issue of our weekly FOCUS E-News? Catch up!

How many priests are still active in your diocese?

Deadline is approaching! Do not miss your chance to register for the 2nd retreat for women discerning a call to the permanent diaconate!

Be inspired each week with Catholic Women Preaching!

SAVE THE DATE!
October 27, 2017
Sr. Sandra Schneiders discusses the Gospel of John as a model for parish/community life today!

From the Executive Director

Peter Steinfels is stumped by Bishop Robert J. Cunningham's claim that he did not see the priest shortage coming (see full article below).

So are we!

The evolving priest shortage with its effect on the availability of the Eucharist was the reason FutureChurch was founded over 26 years ago. The statistics mapping the burgeoning priest
shortage have been available from Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for decades. Further, the crisis has been reported by every major Catholic media source. Most living, breathing Catholics understand the extent of the challenge we face and many have experienced the distress of having their own parish closed or merged as a result of having fewer and fewer priests.

So back to the bishop. Is his incomprehension a ruse? Or is it real? If it is real, is the disconnect from reality more widespread? And is that disconnect the reason we see our bishops letting our parishes slip away rather than finding courageous solutions to keep them vibrant -- action that Pope Francis has urged them to undertake?

One of FutureChurch's new board members, Fr. James Daprille, cannot fathom why the bishops are not getting serious about solving the priest shortage.

In his July 16, 2017 bulletin he writes, "The Second Vatican Council clearly attests that the Eucharist 'is the source and summit' of the Church, of who we are as God’s people. A parish, a Catholic life cannot be vital or authentic without the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Can an already overtaxed priesthood and diminished number of priests sustain the Eucharistic life of the American church? Will priests become 'circuit riders' or
'sacramental dispensers' or 'occasional and impersonal hired hands'?

He continues more pointedly, "Perhaps and more critically, the urgent need for more priests is sidelined. The American bishops (as well as the hierarchy at large) have been loath to even discuss how the Holy Spirit can move the Church in providing more and different priests and deacons: celibate, married, male or female. Of course we pray for vocations but do we expect God to rubber stamp our ways or to be transformed by the Gospel?"

In the fourteenth century, when the church was in tatters, Catherine of Siena challenged Catholic leaders. She challenged the pope. We are called to do the same in our age. Please continue to build the church for tomorrow by taking action today!

Open the discussion with your bishop on married priests

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

DeaconChat: Start a Conversation on Women Deacons

Thank you for all you do!

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

Where have you been,
Peter Steinfels couldn't believe what he was reading. In his parish bulletin was a reprinted column by Bishop Robert J. Cunningham who claimed he did not see the priest shortage coming.

Steinfels calls Cunningham's letter “pathetic.”

He writes that the reprinted column by the bishop was a reflection on the disruptions and disappointments provoked by the latest round of reassignments of priests, including protests of a decision to retire a dozen or so pastors over eighty.

The bishop acknowledged the “heartache and even anger” that understandably occurred when bonds of affection and trust were torn by asking long-serving pastors to step down or moving priests to new duties or parishes elsewhere. I resonated to Bishop Cunningham’s heartfelt plea to parishioners to let go of “what has been” and to embrace “Christ’s presence in what is new.”

But then there was this:

“I for one did not expect the shortage of priests that we are experiencing in our country and within our own diocese. When I was in the seminary and in the early years of my priesthood, vocations to the priesthood flourished. Later years would see a steady decline in vocations, the consequences of
which were not fully grasped until the last ten years or so.

Ten years ago the Diocese of Syracuse had 161 active priests. Today we have 101. Of the active priests 31 have already celebrated their 70th birthday.” What? “I for one did not expect the shortage of priests.... the consequences of which were not fully grasped until the last ten years or so.”

With all due respect, what planet was Bishop Cunningham inhabiting?

Alarms about a priest shortage go back at least to the 1980s. As a matter of fact, the early years of Bishop Cunningham’s priestly life—he was ordained in 1969—saw an exodus from active ministry and a drop in seminary enrollments.

Read more

See updated statistics for your diocese

Is a living wage too much to ask?

Valerie Schulze asks a critical question in a church that increasingly needs lay leaders and ministers to keep parishes vibrant and strong. She writes that as a laywoman who once worked for the church, I can attest that the problem of earning a living wage while doing God’s work is real.

Her words are a challenge to the status quo.

"Working for the church is joyful
and fulfilling and infuriating and really hard. It is also a calling. No one I know goes into church work for the money, but that does not absolve the institutional church of the responsibility to pay its lay workers a just wage. If the parish budget reflects its mission statement, the line items should reflect a commitment to paying its employees fairly, to compensating them in a way that frees them to commit to their heart’s work while still being able to honor their financial obligations.

If the church wants its people to heed God’s call, the church would do well to give its workers enough for their daily bread."

Read more
Nicole Sotelo on the wage gap

Rita Ferrone takes on Ross Douthat when it comes to Pope Francis' legacy

In a recent column by Ross Douthat in the New York Times ("Pope Francis’ Next Act" July 15, 2017) tags the issue of communion for the divorced and remarried as the “great controversy” of the past two years of the Francis pontificate. He says it has reached “a stalemate,” with Francis on the one side, and “bishops the world over” on the other. Now that Cardinal George Pell has gone to Australia to face sex abuse charges, and Cardinal Gerhard Mueller’s term as Prefect of the CDF has not been renewed, and Cardinal Meisner has died, and Cardinal Angelo Scola has retired from the Archdiocese of Milan,
Douthat worries that “resistance to Francis in the highest reaches of the hierarchy” is eroding. What will be the “next act” of the “drama” of this “liberal pope”? I hope the readers of the *New York Times* take Douthat’s analysis with a grain of salt. Read more

In case you missed it: 
**Cardinal Marx rejects clustering of parishes and will allow lay people to lead**

In March 2017, Cardinal Reinhard Marx announced plans to allow laypeople in his Archdiocese of Munich to lead parishes where there are no priests.

In doing so he has strongly rejected the increasingly common option of coping with the dwindling number of ordained ministers by combining or “clustering” parishes.

The 63-year-old cardinal is a top aide and advisor to Pope Francis. He recently told the 180 members of Munich’s diocesan council – its most important lay body – that it was important to preserve individual parishes as a way of guaranteeing the Church’s presence locally. Read more

**An open letter to feminist women religious**

Dear Feminist Religious Sisters,

We need you. We really need
We’re young Catholic feminist women, and we’re lost.

We don’t need to explain how heart-breaking and disappointing the Church’s teachings on women are because we know you understand. We don’t need to describe the struggles of simply existing as a Catholic woman in the Church because you have been living it since before we were born. Just know we’re finally old enough to recognize the sexist and androcentric baloney too.

Read more

Do young people run your diocese?

Nicole Perone offer a vote of confidence to young Catholics who may consider working for the church. Pushing back against age old norms that have discouraged young people from applying for parish and diocesan positions, she argues that young qualified Catholics don’t need to earn their stripes before taking on church leadership roles.

She continues that most people don’t dream of working for the institutional church; it’s not high on the list for childhood career days or suggestions of what to be when one grows up. But I’m not most people.

As my time at Yale Divinity School came to a conclusion, my vocational discernment reached a turning point: I knew pretty generally that I was being called to work for the church, but I did not see the next step very clearly. The opportunity to enter
diocesan work after graduation arose at the same time as other opportunities in Catholic non-profits, some more in my comfort zone.

I took the time to properly discern where God needed me to be and how God wanted me to use my gifts in service to the church. What became clear in prayer was this: I had spent time advocating for women and young people to take on meaningful leadership roles in the church, and now was the time for me to put my money where my mouth was.

Read more

In case you missed it: Pope Francis asks commission to revisit Mass translation

In January, the news out of Rome that Pope Francis has given his blessing to a commission to study “Liturgiam Authenticam,” the controversial 2001 document behind the English translation of the Roman Missal, was surely music to the ears of many who love the church’s liturgy and to just about everyone who loves the English language.

Read more

Filipino Cardinal chastises the Dubia Four

Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato took on the Dubia Four saying, "Within the church, we are hearing also of a vocal minority, they are questioning the vision of Pope Francis, a vision of 'a church of the poor..."
and for the poor," he told delegates.

The cardinal noted that some people in the church hierarchy see the pope's exhortation "as an ideological vision, a vision that comes from the left". "But it is a vision that truly comes from the early times of Christianity, the church of the poor," said Cardinal Quevedo.

Read more

**Why understanding the pitfalls of complementarity is crucial for the future of the Church**

Archbishop Charles Chaput wants women to learn about their "feminine genius" -- "the particular gifts that God gives to women for outreach" at the October 21, first-ever National Catholic Women’s Conference inspired by WINE: Women In the New Evangelization.

At this conference women will learn how their "particular aptness" for the new evangelization is rooted in their unique capacity for relationship.

Archbishop Chaput is one of the many promoters of John Paul II's well defined notion of complementarity -- a framework that seeks to re-baptize women's subordination through a "separate but equal" schema within the church.

FutureChurch's series on complementarity and new series of resources (coming soon!) will help Catholics understand the history, evolution, and what we can do to counter its effects in
The threat of the "smaller, purer" church

Massimo Faggioli writes that Catholic leaders who argue for a smaller Church and a retreat from the public square are stuck between two different and contradictory impulses.

On the one side, their urge is to retain the Church’s role as a pillar of the moral, cultural and political American dispensation as a delayed, transatlantic version of medieval Christendom, especially after the crisis of mainstream Protestantism in the United States.

On the other side, they show deep discontent and panic over the collapse of the political-religious alignments in the country between religious conservatism, the “religious right” and the Republican Party. This collapse is now tempting some American Catholic leaders and opinion makers to call it quits and retreat.

Faggioli warns that giving into the temptation to think about Catholicism in the Western world as an outsider would be a weak alibi and just another way to shy away from our earthly responsibilities.

It would also have serious internal consequences.
It would make the Church less accountable for the future of our world as well as for past mistakes. It would be a more clerical Church. It would make the Church less responsive to the call to be more inclusive according to Jesus’ message in the Gospel. And it would make us forget how much the Church has learned from the outside world about how to be Catholic. Read more (subscription link)

**Progressive champion dies**

Italian Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, who was nominated as Archbishop of Milan by John Paul II and held the post for nearly a decade, has died at the age of 83.

John Allen writes that the cardinal was a moral theologian who contributed to the writing of the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* and was for many years considered a possible candidate to becoming pope.

As archbishop, Tettamanzi in many ways anticipated the 'Pope Francis style' by reaching out to the peripheries and to the marginalized. Read more

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You won't want to miss these FutureChurch events!

Please support this work!
Register for our 2nd retreat for women discerning their call to the permanent diaconate!

Be inspired! Catholic Women Preach!

Learn what you can do to save your parish community

New! Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life 2017 - 2018 SERIES

Check out events offered by our friends

Register for CTA East Coast Conference in Baltimore, MD

October 20 - 21, 2017

For more information contact: Ryan Sattler, CTA MD Chair ryansattler@comcast.net 443.274.1180

Go online: http://conference.calltoactionmd.org