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

Join us for our Fall Event
October 27, 2017
Sr. Sandra Schneiders discusses the Gospel of John as a model for parish/community life today

Join for the 2nd teleconference in our series
Ed Hahnenberg
Emerging Models of Ministry on October 18, 2017

From the Executive Director

_They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. Matthew 23:4_

In Chapter 23, Matthew rails against those who weigh others down with their rigid, heartless prescriptions. It is amazing how the trouble wrought by religious arrogance and intolerance in Matthew's day is repeated in today's church. Pope Francis' criticism of ordained men who rule with steel hearts has been stinging. As the Body of Christ, it is up to us to be vigilant and to stand with those who are the objects of this destructive religious arrogance and intolerance.
As Michael O'Loughlin reported, James Martin, SJ, was disinvited from speaking at Theological Seminary (under the auspices of Catholic University of America) and has been the target of un-Christian and ugly slurs since the publication of his book, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*.

Bishop McElroy took aim at the perpetrators of this ugliness while John Gehring brilliantly exposed the double standard of who gets silenced and who gets to speak, a double standard that many Catholic women have experienced for the greater part of our history.

As Catholics, we stand in solidarity with those who are the targets of these misguided, misinformation campaigns and we challenge those who fold in the face of these tactics.

Please do your part by writing a letter to Rector Gerald McBrearity asking him to re-invite Martin. Below is a sample letter written by Sr. Jeannine Gramick which you can modify with your own personal story.

**Reverend Gerald McBrearity, Rector**

**Theological College**

**401 Michigan Avenue, NE**

**Washington, DC 20017**

**Phone:** 202-756-4907

**Email:** olkiewicz@cua.edu

**SAMPLE LETTER**

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*I write to express my disappointment in your decision to cancel the talk by Fr. James Martin at Theological College. Your response*
reinforces the influence of those who are lobbying to silence his voice, a voice that, like Pope Francis, preaches Jesus and the Gospel of inclusion.

When she heard about the cancellation, a teacher I know said, "I just can’t help thinking about my young gay students whose Catholic parents have just had their own homophobia or ignorance affirmed."

Can you re-invite Fr. Martin as a sign that you are not identifying Theological College with those who do not understand or fear those whose sexual orientation is different from most?

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Thank you for standing in solidarity with those who work for justice in the Church and in the world and for all you do in the service of the Gospel!

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

Bishop Robert McElroy defends James Martin, SJ, and urges Catholics to challenge those who viciously attack others and distort their message

Bishop McElroy writes that Father James Martin is a distinguished Jesuit author who has spent his life building bridges within the Catholic Church and between the church and the wider world. He has been particularly effective in bringing the Gospel message to the millennial generation.

Bishop McElroy acknowledges that there has been legitimate debate over his book (Building a Bridge), but he also notes that alongside this legitimate criticism of Father Martin’s book,
there has arisen both in Catholic journals and on social media a campaign to vilify Father Martin, to distort his work, to label him heterodox, to assassinate his personal character and to annihilate both the ideas and the dialogue that he has initiated.

The bishop also urges that this campaign of distortion must be challenged and exposed for what it is—not primarily for Father Martin’s sake but because this cancer of vilification is seeping into the institutional life of the church. Already, several major institutions have canceled Father Martin as a speaker.

Faced with intense external pressures, these institutions have bought peace, but in doing so they have acceded to and reinforced a tactic and objectives that are deeply injurious to Catholic culture in the United States and to the church’s pastoral care for members of the L.G.B.T. communities.

Read more

How to respond to Catholic trolls

The real scandal by John Gehring

Brian Massingale on the church’s need to work more closely with LGBT members

FutureChurch presents emerging models to Call To Action Columbus, Ohio

While the diocese of Columbus has not officially closed Catholic churches in the same way so many other dioceses have, it is clear that Columbus Catholics
are facing the same challenges that other Catholics with fewer priests, a church where too many are excluded, women's gifts are not fully valued, and a rising number of Catholics who hunger for authenticity, social justice, inclusivity, and community.

On Wednesday evening, Deborah Rose-Milavec of FutureChurch shared statistics, stories and hope for the future as she discussed the variety of innovative and creative models of parish and community life that are newly emerging, but also those that have been around for decades in developing regions of the world. In a time of fewer priests, there is much to learn from our Catholic sisters and brothers who pioneered new Gospel centered communities with little input from their ordained brothers.

Participants said they came away "with a sense of renewed energy" for the work that still needs to be done in the Church.

To learn more about FutureChurch's Emerging Models series CLICK HERE.

A parish is not a Starbucks franchise

Chris Schenk, CSJ, has been writing about about parish mergers and closings for decades. And when it involves the pain of parishioners who are losing their beloved parish communities, she wields a prophetic pen. Schenk cuts right to the heart of the disastrous and short sighted strategy of too many bishops bent on shrinking the Body of Christ because of fewer priests rather
Recommendation: Pittsburgh diocese to go from 188 to 48 parishes

The Pittsburgh Post Gazette reports that the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh took another step toward a massive restructuring Friday with the release of recommendations for merging its current 188 parishes into 48.

The parishes would keep multiple worship sites open, although some churches would close under the recommendations, which come under a restructuring process launched by Bishop David Zubik and titled On Mission for the Church Alive.

But the parishes would each come under a new, streamlined administration designed to cope with declining ranks of priests and worshipers, with the hope of creating fewer but stronger parishes that would be better equipped at outreach.

The dramatic moves were recommended by a diocesan panel called the On Mission Commission.

The commission’s recommendations represent the latest step in a long planning process. They will be reviewed by more diocesan boards in the coming months before Bishop Zubik announces final decisions in April.

“These recommendations are not final decisions,” said the announcement, posted on a diocesan website and to be inserted in church bulletins this weekend.
Pope Francis on clergy sex abuse: The Church waited too long

Joshua McElwee reports that Pope Francis met for the first time with the members of the Commission for the Protection of Minors.

In short, the Pope admitted that

- he was not fully aware that pedophilia was a sickness that could not be cured;
- he and the church had not done enough to protect children;
- it was survivors like Marie Collins and others who helped correct the Church's course.

According to McElwee, Pope Francis praised Marie Collins and Cardinal O'Malley who are working jointly with newly appointed bishops to reinforce stronger standards.

The pope said, "The church irrevocably and at all levels seeks to apply the principle of 'zero tolerance' against sexual abuse of minors."

Robert Mickens on a Pope who still learns

Marie Collins responds to Pope Francis: "Zero tolerance is toothless"

Crux reports that Marie Collins is not satisfied with Pope Francis' promises. She says that "zero tolerance is toothless and without accountability."
John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in order to integrate Amoris Laetitia

Gerald O'Connell reports that as a follow-up to the publication of "Amoris Laetitia" and the two synods on the family, Pope Francis has refounded the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, giving it a broader mandate than it originally had to ensure that it does not just focus on moral and sacramental theology, but also takes account of the biblical, dogmatic and historical dimensions, as well as contemporary challenges.

Francis did so by a motu proprio, dated Sept. 8, which the Vatican released today in Latin and Italian. The decree, known by its Latin title, “Summa familiae cura,” announced the establishment of the “John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences.” It replaces the original one set up by his Polish predecessor after the 1980 synod on the family, and the publication of the post-synod exhortation, “Familiaris Consortio,” which was called the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family.

Read more
Read CNA report

Cardinal Mueller criticizes Pope Francis (again)

Christa Pongratz-Lippitt and Christopher Lamb report that Cardinal Gerhard Mueller has criticized Francis' papacy for lacking theological rigor, while suggesting he is ready to make a comeback and work in the Roman Curia.
During a book presentation in Germany last Friday, Müller, dismissed from his job by the Pope in July, recalled how the Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) told Pope Clement VIII that he did not understand anything about theology.

According to reports of the event in Mannheim the German cardinal then pointed out that Bellarmine was sacked from the Curia three times. Muller added he thought it possible he could return to the curia - a suggestion which was greeted with great applause.

The cardinal criticised Latin American approach to theology, in what was a thinly veiled critique of the Argentinian Pope and his theological advisers from the continent. Read more

Msgr. Ray Cole and the future of the church

On Wednesday, September 13, Msgr. Ray Cole of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests discussed their National Plan for Priest-less Parishes. You can hear the podcast here.

Core to their plan is "new and more specific exploration" of lay ecclesial ministers to oversee non-sacramental aspects of parish life and administration.

In February 2017, the AUSCP submitted their draft plan for public comment.

Also on the call were other priests who have experience with small Christian communities led by lay leaders in Africa and Latin America.
Those on the call learned in greater detail how those communities function and how they interact with priests.

Listen to the podcast

Register for our next teleconference with Ed Hahnenberg on Emerging Models of Ministry.

Bishops of India issue guidelines for dealing with clergy sex abuse

Rita Sharmu reports that the Indian Catholic bishops have asked their institutions and dioceses across the country to establish a system to receive complaints of sexual abuse, study them and report crimes to the police.

The bishops' Guidelines to "Deal with Sexual Harassment at Workplace," the first such initiative, was released in New Delhi Sept. 14. The guidelines were framed by the Women Council of the Indian Catholic bishops' conference.

Besides church institutions, all dioceses, parishes and religious congregations will institute complaints committees to which a case of sexual harassment can be reported. The committees are to do a preliminary enquiry and crimes are to be reported to the police.

The guidelines want all kinds of abuse, including abuse by clergy, sexual harassment of men and abuse of transgender men and women to be reported.

Sister Talisha Nadukudiyil, secretary of the bishops' Council for Women, told ucanews.com that Indian women continue to
be victims of disrespect, attacks and harassment at home and at work because of "an unchanged and archaic social structure marked by patriarchy."

Read more at UCAnews
Read more at Vatican Radio

Mary Hunt on writing Catholic women's history

Mary Hunt writes that Catholic women's history fades as fast as we make it because few people write about it. Donna Quinn in Chicago Catholic Women: Its Role in Founding the Catholic Women's Movement and Marian Ronan and Mary O'Brien in Women of Vision: Sixteen Founders of the International Grail Movement reverse the tide in volumes that provide rich data for future scholars to analyze. They provide details of people, places, events and trends that shape an ever so slightly more inclusive, if still quite exclusive, church.

Read more

Vatican holds gathering for young Catholics ahead of 2018 Synod

Vatican Radio reported that from 11 to 15 September 2017, at the Auditorium of the Jesuit General Curia, an International Seminar on the condition of youth in the world was held in preparation for the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme The young, faith and vocational discernment, to be held in October 2018.

The Seminar was attended by 82 people invited from the five continents: 21 young people, 17 experts from ecclesiastical universities, 15 experts from
other universities, 20 formators and youth and vocational pastoral workers, and 9 representatives of entities of the Holy See. From a geographical perspective, 52 participants were European, 18 from the Americas, 7 Asian, 4 African, and one Australian. Of particular interest was the presence of young people from different geographical, socio-cultural and religious contexts: they contributed actively to the study days, also introducing and concluding the event with their life experiences and reflections. Since the Seminar was also open to all those interested in the theme, around 50 guests also took part, including some young people.

Read more

Harvard Psychologist Arthur McCaffrey critiques Bishop Perez’s apology

The Beacon Journal recently reported on the formal installation of the new Catholic bishop of Cleveland, Nelson Perez ("Cleveland rocks,’ new ‘bishop tells the faithful,” Sept. 6). The story highlighted his personal appeal to the laity for forgiveness for the church’s "horrendous" history of child abuse, as if this was a novel gesture after the dour administration of his predecessor Bishop Lennon.

Part of the problem of achieving justice for abuse victims is that their plight is often misrepresented. The Beacon Journal story about Perez, for instance, used a worn cliche — child abuse “scandals.” Scandals happen in Hollywood: abuse is not a scandal, it is a crime. Moreover, punishment for abuse crimes gets distorted in Catholic
theology behind a smokescreen of “forgiveness,” “sorrow,” and “repentance,” helping rationalise the church’s in-house handling of child abuse as an absolvable sin rather than the heinous crime that needs to be prosecuted first and pardoned later.

So please, Bishop Perez, don’t whitewash crime with calls for forgiveness, as if the latter were some kind of holy water detergent that could wash away the permanent stain created by clergy abuse of children.

India's Cardinal Gracias reports the G-9 is almost finished with its work of reform

Elise Harris reports that nearly four years after the Pope established his Council of Cardinal advisers to help him in the task of reforming the Roman Curia, one member of the group said their work is wrapping up, and that it could take only a few more meetings to finish what they set out to do.

The ongoing process of reform “is being done at various stages of development, and I hope we'll come to an end in all of these matters soon,” Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay told CNA Sept. 14.

He said a key goal of the C9 is to implement the vision of the Second Vatican Council, specifically when it comes to the importance of the role of the laity and women, and incorporating greater synodality and collegiality into the Church's structures.

Read more
You won't want to miss these FutureChurch events!

Please support this work!

Be inspired! Catholic Women Preach!

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

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