



## FOCUS E-News

December 17 - 24, 2017 Edition

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### From the Executive Director's Desk

On the day Cardinal Bernard Law passed away, three Catholic organizations, FutureChurch, Women's Ordination Conference, and Call To Action, launched a new initiative, [#CatholicToo](https://twitter.com/CatholicToo).

**#CatholicToo**

Some might consider that a cosmic coincidence, but more importantly, November 20, 2017 is a signpost - a marker of a shift in consciousness that is being propelled by Catholic women themselves and their allies.

Most Catholics know well the damage heaped upon Catholics by Bernard Law and so many others in their attempts to protect the institution over victims of clergy sex abuse. Under intense scrutiny for his massive coverup for pedophile priests, on [December 13, 2002](#) [he resigned](#).

Catholics also recall his behind the scenes manipulations to punish LCWR and women religious by launching a Vatican investigation into their work.

[John Allen takes stock of his accomplishments](#), even as he recalls Law's disdain for many Vatican II reforms.

The passing of Bernard Law is a rich reminder that the era of clerical authoritarianism is passing away and a new way of being Church -- one that is radically collaborative and intimately tied to the faith, ministry, and governance of lay Catholics is emerging.

#CatholicToo is just one effort among so many stellar efforts to create a more just, whole, and holy Church.

Catholics know the damaging effects of a hierarchy that upholds a culture that

normalizes gender inequality and, too often, protects abusive men while discrediting and silencing victims.

CatholicToo is a platform for women's voices and stories to be heard and amplified. Join the movement to confront and discredit sacralized sexism. As a Church community, we bear witness to the stories of victims and survivors, celebrate courage and resilience, and pledge to transform our Church and society into a place of healing, truth-telling, and justice.

1. SHARE YOUR STORY.

Use hastags #CatholicToo  
#MeToo

2. ACCOMPANY SILENCE  
BREAKERS.

#CatholicToo #IWill

3. COMMIT TO ACTION TO END  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND  
VIOLENCE.

#CatholicToo #IWill

Thank you for all you do to create a church where both women and men are fully valued for their gifts.

May these days celebrating the birth of the God of love, justice, and mercy in our lives be a blessing to each and every one of you.

Deborah Rose-Milavec  
Executive Director

**Australian bishops respond to  
Royal Commission report**

Australian bishops pledged

reforms and apologized to 8,000 survivors of child sex abuse on December 15, following the release of the Royal Commission's final report on a five-year probe.



"This is a shameful past, in which a prevailing culture of secrecy and self-protection led to unnecessary suffering for many victims and their families," said Archbishop Denis Hart, president of the bishops' conference.

Many of the 189 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse "will have a significant impact on the way the Catholic Church operates in Australia", the archbishop said.

"Once again I reiterate my unconditional apology for this suffering and a commitment to ensuring justice for those affected," said Hart.

Sister Ruth Durick, OSU, president of Catholic Religious Australia, paid tribute to "the courage of all those survivors who have come forward." The Truth, Justice and Healing Council of the organization has commissioned an initial assessment of the Royal Commission's findings, she added.

[Read more.](#)

## **Macho ideology is destructive**

Olivia Gazalé suggests that women's testimonials about sexual harassment have a

positive effect on men.

The majority of men I have talked to about this, support women speaking out. The women affected could be their mothers, wives, sisters or daughters... they can't be unaffected. We have to be clear, not all men are guilty, not by a long shot, and their indignation is real. Nothing would be more detrimental to society than to stir up misandry [prejudice against men] and misogyny at the same time.

However, there are some who are worried by the situation and lament the "good old days." Others take a more misogynist tone and criticize [perceived] feminist hysteria and denounce the emasculation and victimization of men. Still others fear the disappearance of chivalry.

This is way off topic, of course, since women are not speaking out against an excess of attentiveness and concern, but for more respect. We have to get beyond the rhetoric of denial about the violence of which women are victim.

How can we avoid a "battle of the sexes?"

[Read more.](#)

### **Pope Francis renews commission but will survivors be included?**

Gerald O'Connell reports that Pope Francis will renew the mandate of the [Pontifical Commission for the Protection of](#)



Minors for another three years, informed sources told America this week. Its membership, however, will not be announced until the New Year. While many of its current members will be renewed for a second three-year term, others will be replaced.



The news, which is expected to be announced in the coming days, comes after Francis met the full commission in a private audience in the Vatican on Sept. 21. He indicated then that he wished the P.C.P.M. to continue its work, or as he put it, "to continue to be of great assistance in the coming years to the pope, the Holy See, bishops and major superiors throughout the world."

[Read more.](#)

### **Pope Francis and the Jesuits in Bangladesh and Myanmar**

[Luke Hansen, SJ is a contributing editor for the transcription and translation of Pope Francis's dialogue with Jesuits in Myanmar and Bangladesh.](#)



At one point during the discussion Francis said, "I must say that I felt these moments as being very free, especially when they happen during my journeys: this is the occasion to make my first thoughts on that trip. I feel at home and I speak our family's language, and I do not fear misunderstandings. So, what I say can sometimes be a little risky."

[Read more.](#)

## Cardinal Müller repeats threats of schism

Robert Mickens reports that just hours before Pope Francis embarked on his 21st journey abroad last Sunday, Italy's most authoritative daily newspaper published an interview with Cardinal Gerhard Müller. In it, the cardinal launched what amounts to a shot across the bow and an attempt to condition the pope's freedom in guiding the Church.

The former head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) basically issued this ultimatum: Francis must open a dialogue with the tiny fringe of traditionalist Catholics that don't like the direction in which he's leading the Church or there will be a schism.

Schism. That's one of the most serious and dangerous words in the Roman Catholic lexicon. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) there has been only one formal fracture in the Church's communion. It came in 1988 when, in direct defiance of Pope John Paul II, the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (d. 1991) ordained four bishops for the Priestly Society of St Pius X (SSPX) and fell into schism. Now Cardinal Müller has warned that the Church is on the verge of splintering again if Pope Francis continues to ignore his critics.

"The authorities of the Church must listen to those who have serious questions or just



complaints; not ignore them or, worse, humiliate them.

Otherwise, inadvertently, this can increase the risk of a slow separation that could lead to a schism by a part of the Catholic world that is disoriented and discouraged," the cardinal warned.

[Read more.](#)

## **Bernard Law dies**

The trauma of the clergy abuse scandal brought to light in early 2002 was reawakened this week as the world learned of the death of disgraced, and then bailed out, "prince of the Church," Cardinal Bernard Law.

His death, and ceremonial burial with all the pomp and circumstance from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, has re-traumatized a Catholic population, in Boston and around the globe, still longing to heal from the wounds of the abuse cover-up, protection of perpetrators, and the enabling of the rape of thousands upon thousands of God's innocents. Secular and Catholic news outlets alike have been filled with contrasting reports of analysis, justification for the royal funeral, and contempt for the golden parachute that Law received when he resigned from his post as Archbishop of the Boston Archdiocese and was awarded a "retirement" post as archpriest of the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, one of the four pontifical churches of Vatican City.

A full Vatican burial is



confounding to millions of Catholics who see such an event, and the Pope's presiding over it, as a tacit endorsement of Law's actions to prioritize the hierarchy over the people. In a particularly poignant and courageous post, Jesuit Father James Martin, editor at large of America media, said "And with due respect for the customs of the Vatican, and for the norms of protocol for cardinals and prelates, it is a stupefyingly obtuse symbol, which undercuts the church's mission to hold bishops accountable for their actions, particularly regarding the abuse of children." [Click here for the full post.](#)

Full reporting can be found at:

[NY Times](#)

[Boston Globe](#)

[Reuters](#)

[America](#)

[National Catholic Reporter](#)

[Catholic Herald](#)

[WBUR Radio Boston](#)

[America - Francis Needs to Restore Trust](#)

[NY Times - A Judgment Day](#)

[CRUX - Cardinal O'Malley](#)

[Statement](#)

[CNN](#)

## **Popesplaining**

Kaya Oakes reviews Francis's latest book, ["Happiness in This Life."](#)

She writes that Francis devotes an entire chapter to "The Blessings and Challenges of Womanhood." His statement that "the role of women in the Church is more than maternal,



more than being the mother of a family," gets us off to a good start, but the repeated emphasis on John Paul II's notion of a "feminine genius" is where the trouble begins. How can a woman be happy when her worth is reduced to her "feminine" qualities?

Women have a "special attention" that we "bestow on others" often "expressed in maternity." "A woman who cares for every aspect of her family life," Francis says, "is making an incomparable contribution to the future of our society," but women are also "weary and nearly crushed by the volume of their many duties and tasks." History, he says "is rife with an excess of patriarchal cultures," yet in the same sentence he condemns the use of surrogate mothers. And there is a danger, according to the pope, that women who are emancipated "ignore the precious feminine traits that characterize womanhood."

Complementarianism is often given props in Francis' talks on the role of women in both the church and family. Men and women are "made very differently," and therefore, we should beware of "machismo in a skirt." And women should "try not to be angry" because it's been proven that we are the "champions," not men. What would solve the problem of women's oppression would be a "profound theology of women," but just a year ago, Francis reiterated that the door to women's ordination remains closed. So is this profound

theology of women therefore supposed to come from men?

[Read more](#)

## **Catholics for Renewal comment on Royal Commission report**

The Australian reform group, Catholics for Renewal, consider it fortuitous, perhaps even providential, that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse published its [Final Report](#) just days before Christmas, for its many volumes contain one very simple and powerful message: we must all take responsibility for placing the child at the centre of our thinking and acting and, above all, for protecting the child from harm.

### **PAIN**

For Australian Catholics it has been painful to read what the Commission has said of our church:

It is remarkable that in so many cases the perpetrator of abuse was a member of an organisation that professed to care for children. Just as remarkable was the failure of the leaders of that institution to respond with compassion to the survivor. Many institutions did not have a culture where the best interests of children were the priority. Some leaders did not take responsibility for their institution's failure to protect children. Some leaders felt their primary responsibility was to protect the institution's



reputation, and the accused person. Many did not recognise the impact this had on children. Many children have been sexually abused in religious institutions [and] the greatest number of alleged perpetrators and abused children were in Catholic institutions.

The failure to understand that the sexual abuse of a child was a crime with profound impacts for the victims, and not a mere moral failure capable of correction by contrition and penance (a view expressed in the past by a number of religious leaders) is almost incomprehensible. It can only be explained by acknowledging that the culture of some religious institutions prioritised alleged perpetrators and institutional reputations over the safety of children. In past generations, the trust placed by some parents and the broader community in institutions and their members meant that abusers were enabled and children's interests were compromised. The prevailing culture that 'children should be seen and not heard' resonated throughout residential care, religious institutions, schools and some family homes. Their complaints of abuse ignored and rejected, many children lost faith in adults and society's institutions.

### **DISMAY**

The Commission was clearly dismayed at how Catholic bishops, priests and religious had strayed so far from what Jesus and the gospels had taught about children. It had

begun its work assuming that these ministers were imbued with those teachings. It had assumed that they were aware of the messages in the Christmas story: of how every child is a precious gift of God – recall the extraordinary conception of John the Baptist to the elderly and barren Elizabeth; of how much joy the birth of a child brings not only to parents, but to family, friends and neighbours and, with the birth of Jesus, to strangers and the whole world – recall the wise men and the angel's message to the shepherds; of how parents must be warned of the presence of predators in their midst – recall the warnings to Joseph and the wise men; and of how parents have a profound fear for the safety of their vulnerable and innocent children – recall the 3-day anxiety of Mary and Joseph when Jesus went missing on the journey home from Jerusalem.

At the outset, the Commission had assumed that these ministers were aware of how Jesus had placed children at the centre of the Kingdom of God – recall when the disciples had tried to turn some little children away and Jesus had said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

The Commission had assumed that they were aware that we must all become like children – recall the disciples asking Jesus "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" and Jesus

calling a little child to himself, setting the child in front of them and saying: "Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven ... and the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven".

The Commission had assumed that, of all people, bishops, priests and religious were aware of the awful fate that will befall anyone who harms a child – recall Jesus' most fearful warning: "Anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone around his neck. Alas for the world that there should be such obstacles! Obstacles indeed there must be, but alas for the man who provides them! ... See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven."

The Commission was right to assume what it did. Yet, in the end, it found that so many bishops, priests and religious had taken little or no notice of the gospel teachings. They had failed to comprehend how precious is a child, how much joy a child brings, how vulnerable a child is, how much it needs to be protected, how much parents fear for the safety of their child, how parents are entitled to be warned of the danger of predators, and how gravely families and communities suffer

when a child is harmed.

## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

At the first Christmas, the angel announced a “joy to be shared by the whole people”. At Christmas 2017, the Royal Commission has announced a shame to be shared by all Australians.

The Commission has made a very practical recommendation to Australia’s Catholic bishops: conduct a national review of the Church’s diocesan and parish governance and management structures, and ensure that they include accountability and transparency, and consultative processes that include all the faithful.

And for all of us, the Commission has this most important message that we dare not neglect or forget: It is the responsibility of our entire community to acknowledge that children are vulnerable to abuse. We must each resolve that we will do what we can to protect them. The tragic impact of abuse for individuals, and through them our entire society, demands nothing less.

Despite the shame that we must bear this Christmas, Catholics for Renewal prays that the Joy which is inherent in the birth of the Christ child will break through our present sadness and fill our hearts with love and faith and, above all, the firm hope that our church will become again that sign of the Kingdom that it is meant to be.

[Read more](#)  
[Link to Royal Commission report](#)

## **Pope Francis is losing patience with his detractors**

Robert Mickens argues that the Pope Francis has been tenacious in his efforts to bring about reform and renewal in the Church. He's probably been more successful at changing perceptions and attitudes – call it the overall Catholic ethos, if you will – among the vast array of believers (and non-believers) around the world.

But changing the mindset and workings the Roman Curia? Probably not so much.

Here at “home”, he's tried to be sensitive and patient. However, during his pre-Christmas talk to the cardinals and curia officials, Francis – who had just turned 81 a few days earlier – showed that he's losing patience with those at the Vatican who are standing in the way of his reforms.

He identified at least three types of obstructionists. First, there are those who foment an “unbalanced and debased mindset of plots and small cliques”. He said that “for all their self-justification and good intentions” they are, in fact, part of “a cancer leading to a self-centeredness that also seeps into ecclesiastical bodies, and in



particular those working in them”.

Second, there are “those who betray the trust put in them and profiteer from the Church’s motherhood”. Here it is worth quoting the pope in full:

“I am speaking of persons carefully selected to give a greater vigor to the body and to the reform, but – failing to understand the lofty nature of their responsibility – let themselves be corrupted by ambition or vainglory. Then, when they are quietly sidelined, they wrongly declare themselves martyrs of the system, of a ‘pope kept in the dark’, of the ‘old guard’..., rather than reciting a mea culpa.”

[Read more](#)

### **New Irish bishop of Galway appointed**

La Croix reports that Pope Francis has appointed Achrony Bishop Brendan Kelly as the new Bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh, Ireland.

An announcement in the Diocese of Achrony’s website names Galway, Kilmacduagh, and Kilfenora as Bishop Kelly’s native diocese.

He also served as its vicar general in 2007 and consecrated Bishop of Achrony the following year.

The bishop was born on May 20, 1946, was ordained priest on



June 20, 1971.

He spent early priesthood teaching and was president of Our Lady's College in Gort in the west of Ireland from 1986 to 1995. The bishop is president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Ireland's Council for Education.

Achrony's vicar general, Monsignor Thomas Johnston, said Bishop Kelly fostered various ministries and encouraged volunteers at parish and diocesan levels.

[Read more.](#)



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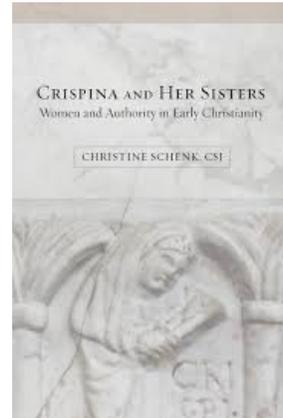
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As co-founder of FutureChurch, Christine Schenk, CSJ spent decades researching and writing about women in early Christianity. Like many feminists who have recovered the history and importance of women's authority, ministry and leadership in early Christianity, 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.