



## FOCUS E-News

April 16 - 22, 2017

***Follow in the Footsteps of Our Foremothers in Faith***  
***FutureChurch Pilgrimage to Greece***  
***October 5 - 14, 2017***  
***Educational Director Sr. Chris Schenk***  
***Get discounted price until April 30, 2017!***



### Washington Post gets the story of Mary of Magdala right

Even the Washington Post is interested in how Mary of Magdala has been maligned and demoted throughout the centuries.

Why? Because it matters today.

In her April 13 article, columnist Petula Dvorak writes, "Here's who Mary Magdalene was: one of Jesus Christ's original followers, the last to stay with him while he was nailed to the cross and, Christians believe, the first to see his empty tomb and his resurrection.

Here's who she wasn't: a reformed or forgiven prostitute.

Yet on Easter Sunday, Christianity's holiest day, that's exactly how she will be described in some sermons and how she continues to be portrayed in much of popular culture."

[Read more](#)

FutureChurch resource: [Restoring Mary](#)



## Comparing responses to clergy sex abuse worldwide

Arthur McCaffrey has conducted wide-ranging research comparing how various countries have dealt with clergy sex abuse. He argues that, while accountability in the face of clergy sex abuse is still in a miserable state, the hard hitting investigations and reports from Ireland, Scotland, Australia and other countries are an "embryonic literature of social action and accountability." McCaffrey states that these newly emerging reports signal the appearance of a "new genre of civic literature that serves a social purpose."

Introducing his research he writes, "This is a story about institutional crime and social justice. At times, it may seem there is too much of the former and not enough of the latter. That's the bad news. The good news is, when the institutional crime involves the abuse and exploitation of children, a number of different governments, in different countries, in different parts of the world, are finally beginning to do something. Unfortunately, the US government is not one of them."

[Read more](#)



## In Portugal, women take up ministry and leadership where priests leave off

In some villages of southwest Portugal, the Catholic priest shortage had led several women, simple believers, to celebrate the Sunday encounter themselves to facilitate the religious life of these communities that are aging but open to change.

In the tiny church of Carrapatelo, a village of fifty houses set on a hill that looks out over the vineyards of the

Reguengos de Monsaraz region, Claudia Rocha (*photo*), dressed in black with sneakers, addresses a dozen faithful, mostly older women.

While her leather jacket and smartphone are waiting for her in the first pew, the 31-year-old woman easily handles this "Sunday assembly in the absence of a priest."

[Read more](#)



## Pope Francis seeks broad consultation in appointing new vicar of Rome

Pope Francis is asking Rome priests and lay Catholics to recommend candidates and qualities for the city's next vicar, a novel initiative that underscores his desire to decentralize church decision-making and involve laity more in consultations.

During a closed-door meeting with Rome priests, Francis asked that suggestions be sent to the diocese by April 12, the newspaper of Italy's bishops' conference reported.

Usually such consultations are restricted to a small cadre of high-ranking churchmen, with the pope making the final decision. But Francis has made a practice of polling ordinary Catholics, most significantly in the run-up to his 2014-2015 meetings on family issues.

[Read more](#)



## Are the bishops up to the pope's challenge to build a synodal Church?

Massimo Faggioli examines how bishops have responded to Pope Francis' call for a more synodal church. He argues that in a world rife with

hostility, the need for local and regional leadership is greater than ever. But, according to Faggioli, the bishops have been too reliant on the pope.

[Read more](#) (subscription link)



## Taking God to the people

Surveys by the Pew Research Center and other organizations paint a worrisome picture for religious institutions, especially in Massachusetts. Pew ranks Massachusetts in a tie with New Hampshire as the least religious of all 50 states, in the least-religious region of the country. Massachusetts has almost as many residents who claim no religious affiliation as Roman Catholics.

“It’s a different world, and you have to adapt to it,” said the Rev. Paul Soper, a former pastor at St. Albert The Great Parish in Weymouth and now the Boston Archdiocese’s secretary for evangelization and discipleship.

On the first Friday night each month, musicians, poets and artists gather with youth and their parents at The Sanctuary in Marshfield for “safe space” time that doesn’t include a hymn or sermon.

[Read more](#)



## Who is viewing Catholic Women Preach?

There is a hunger among Catholics to hear women proclaim the Word of God through their faith experience. CatholicWomenPreach.org has been doing just that since the beginning of Advent 2016.

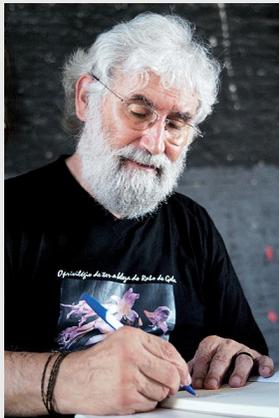
Since that time we have been inspired by preachers such as Sr. Jamie Phelps, Nontando Hadebe, Sr. Mary Catherine Hilker, Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, Sr.

Margaret Farley, M. Shawn Copeland, Marie Dennis and more!

But who is listening? Who is engaged in this preaching experience?

Since the website launch in Advent, there has been over 43,000 views of the preaching videos. Overall, a majority of the viewers are women (72%), but when grouped by age 53% of viewers age 25-34 years are male as are 48% of viewers age 35-44. Forty-three percent of viewers are male in the 18-24 age category. With viewers age 55 and above the number of women engaged is much higher ranging from 73% to 79%.

[Learn more](#)



## **Leonardo Boff seeks reconciliation with Benedict XVI**

Leonardo Boff, the popular liberation theologian from Brazil and former Franciscan priest, has expressed a desire to “embrace” and effect a “kind of reconciliation” with the man who once silenced him – Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the now-retired Benedict XVI.

[Read more](#)



## **Two dioceses in Germany take differing paths in the face of the priest shortage**

After a 2016 synod of priests and lay Catholics, the diocese of Trier in Germany wants to reduce its 887 parishes to 35 mega-parishes. From mid-May until the end of June, they will be seeking input on this plan from parishes, church organizations and individual Catholics. The feedback will be processed at the end of September and a revised plan will be developed.

In the end, the final decision is reserved for the bishop.

However, not all bishops favor clustering. Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich wants to end clustering by putting teams of lay leaders in place in parishes and continuing discussions of opening the priesthood to married men (The Tablet, 1Apr17).



## French Bishops' Conference spokesman expresses shame after 25 bishops accused of shielding priests guilty of sexual abuse

The spokesman for the French Bishops' Conference, Mgr. Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, expressed "profound shame" after a television documentary accused 25 bishops, five still in office, of shielding 32 priests guilty of sexual abuse from justice and moving them around France and other countries to keep their past out of the spotlight. *Mediapart*, an online journal, and television journalists conducted a year long inquiry and created a database listing 339 victims. The outlet also tracked the transfer of alleged abusers within France and abroad, especially to posts in Africa (The Tablet, 1Apr17).

[National Catholic Reporter article](#)

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## Don't miss these opportunities and events!

Join FutureChurch in Greece and follow in the footsteps of our foremothers in faith

[Join by April 30, 2017 to get the](#)



[discounted price](#)

## [\*\*Listen to Sr. Chris and Russ Share a Preview of the Pilgrimage\*\*](#)

From October 5 - 14, 2017 join FutureChurch as we explore the archaeological sites of early Christian women. Learn about the ancient Greek goddesses Athena, Artemis and Gaia to women of the New Testament and finally present day nuns in Greek monasteries. This pilgrimage will focus on the influence of women on the spirituality and history of Christianity. Sr. Christine Schenk will serve as educational director and Russ Petrus, FutureChurch program director will serve as spiritual director. Register by April 30 and receive a discount.

[Read more](#)

## **Voices Speaking Event**

### **Join FutureChurch's Deborah Rose-Milavec as she talks about "Current Trends in Fostering the Role of Women in the Catholic Church"**

Women are leaving the Catholic Church in record numbers. But they are also advancing in brand new ways. Learn about the bumpy road toward equality in the Catholic Church and why it is important to carry on that work.

April 29, 2017  
2:00 - 4:00 pm  
First United Church of Christ  
5808 Glenview Ave.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45224

[Learn more](#)

## **FutureChurch offers second retreat for Catholic women discerning a call to the diaconate**



FutureChurch will host a second retreat for women who are discerning a call to the diaconate September 8-10 in San Francisco, CA. This second retreat will also include a special workshop on one component of diaconal ministry: the Ministry of the Word – particularly Liturgical Preaching. Sign up today!

[Learn more](#)



## Catholic Women Preach

Each week throughout the year, Catholic Women Preach offers the wisdom and challenge presented by the Gospel through the experience of women. In this season of Easter, be inspired by the Catholic women who preach each Sunday and some holy days.



[Learn more](#)

Support our work



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