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Austrian cardinal expresses openness to women deacons

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn OP has voiced cautious openness towards re-introducing the female diaconate in the Western Church, saying it was once a centuries-long tradition and continued to be practiced in the East.

[Read more](#)



Women step forward after two priests refuse to wash the feet of women during Holy Thursday rite

Two Eastern churches, the Syro-Malabar Church and the Syro-Malankara Church of Kerala, put out statements that they will not allow women to participate in the washing-of-the-feet ceremony on Maundy Thursday, even after Pope Francis' decree.

Responding with concern to this news report, on March 31, 2017, the Indian Christian Women's Movement, a network organization of over 500 women from different Christian denominations, sent out letters to heads of the three churches in India – Roman Catholic, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara – urging them to issue

directives to all parishes of their respective denominations to include women and girls in the washing of feet ritual on Maundy Thursday. But the response to this letter was lukewarm.

It is against this background that the celebration of the ritual of washing of the feet organized by a group, Women's Lives Matter, gains significance. In keeping with the new directions which Pope Francis has set, the group celebrated the feet washing ceremony with the inmates of Swantham Centre for battered Women and children at Kottayam in Kerala on [April 11](#), two days prior to the day marked for the celebrations.

[Read more](#)



Dioceses join forces in the face of priest shortage

Five bishops of the province of Poitiers have addressed a joint letter on April 10th to the priests of their dioceses.

They are concerned about the drop in the number of priests and the resulting malaise and the future of parish communities.

The bishops are Pascal Wintzer of Poitiers, Francis Bestion of Tulle, Fr Claude Chartier, diocesan administrator of Limoges, Georges Colomb of La Rochelle and Saintes, and Hervé Gosselin of Angoulême.

The objective was to better meet expectations in terms of "new aspirations regarding the exercise of priestly ministry", namely diversity of mission, geographical mobility and cross-cutting work across dioceses.

[Read more](#)



Irish Jesuit says without women, the Church loses its relevancy

The number of Irish Catholics who identify as having "no religion" is spiking.

Fr Gerry O'Hanlon, former Provincial of the Jesuit order, noted that new census figures show a 74% surge.

Although 78% still classify themselves as "Catholics", Fr O'Hanlon says many of these were "cultural Catholics".

The Jesuit theologian said this week's census shows that the church needs to read the signs of the times to allow the voices of lay people to be heard and in particular women.

"Women are stalwarts of the Catholic Church when it comes of attendance and participation. The role of women in the church, as it is now, is unacceptable in modern times."

[Read more](#)



A View of Francis from Argentina

Religion Professor Verónica Giménez Béliveau, at the University of Buenos Aires comments on Pope Francis' conservative Latin American roots and how it steers his decisions.

[Read more](#)



Todd Salzman, Ph.D. and Michael Lawler, Ph.D. talk about Pope Francis and complementarity during FutureChurch teleconference

Do you think Pope Francis is locked into John Paul II's understanding of complementarity? Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler argue there are

significant differences. Complementarity, the Pope says, “is a word into which many meanings are compressed.” Salzman and Lawler make the case that Francis’ approach introduces nuances to the traditionally male-female understanding of the word and opens up an anthropological and theological discussion about the ongoing understanding of the word and its implications for all sexual relationships, including homosexual.

[Listen to the podcast](#)

The Heartbreak of Church Closings in the Hartford Diocese

More than 100 churchgoers left St. Michael Church on Clark Street for the final time and made their way to their new parish about 1.5 miles away at St. Justin-St. Michael Parish on Blue Hills Avenue. The church is merging with St. Justin Church after a year of discussing how to sustain Catholic parishes in the city’s North End.

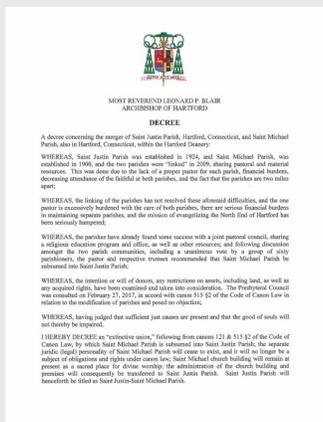
The Archdiocese of Hartford, which oversees 212 parishes, announced in late 2016 that it would be merging or closing 100 parishes as it grapples with aging buildings, fewer Catholic households and a shortage of priests.

[Read more](#)

Process used to close Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Worcester was crushing to parishioners

Some parishioners from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Worcester described the closing of their parish as “crushing.”

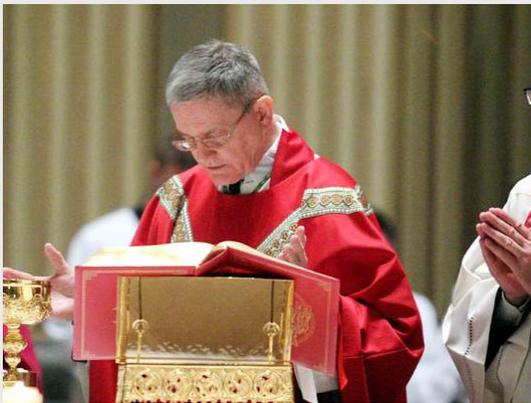
“The way they have treated us is 10



times more damaging than the actual closing of the church,” said a longtime member. She vowed that she would “never join another Worcester Diocese church.”

When asked what could have been done differently, one parishioner said, “They could have listened to us. . . . What was missing was transparency, openness to fresh ideas, and a willingness to work together and think outside the box. They resented us and our questions right from the beginning.”

[Read more](#)



Philadelphia prelate appointed nuncio to Great Britain

Archbishop Edward Adams has been appointed as the new nuncio to Great Britain. He graduated from the Vatican’s prestigious diplomatic training school in 1976 and is currently serving in Greece. He has previously been a papal ambassador to Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and the Philippines.

[Read more](#)



Synod of Bishops' survey for youth still not out

Pope Francis has again told the Synod secretariat to involve the entire Church in its preparations by, among other things, demanding that the bishops’ conference surveys their young people.

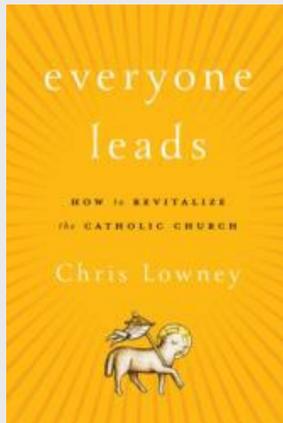
Journalist [Robert Mickens writes](#) that Episcopal conferences have the freedom to conduct this survey in any way they choose. In the past, some appeared to carry out little consultation. But others, like the Bishops of England and Wales, canvassed their people directly. And there are doing so again by posting [an on-line questionnaire](#) that

young people are encouraged to answer.

The Synod secretariat has decided to issue its own questionnaire. Cardinal Baldisseri and Bishop Fabene announced back in January that it would be placed on a new website (www.sinodogiovani2018.va) that was supposed to be active on March 1st.

But it is still nowhere to be found.

[Read more](#)



New book by Chris Lowney calls on the laity to act

Chris Lowney knows the Church is suffering on many different levels. But he believes there is a fix.

In his latest book, **Everyone Leads: How to Revitalize the Catholic Church**, he writes, "the church needs to tap all the talent at its disposal. The message to everyone in the pews needs to be: We have profound challenges; we don't have all the answers; it's all hands on deck; we need your talent, ideas, imagination, initiative, and dedicated work."

But that message is not being proclaimed.

"Less than half of parishioners, for example, feel invited and encouraged to participate in parish ministry, and only a third understand clearly how to become more involved, and fewer than 20% feel they have a role in parish decision making."

He calls those percentages "horrific" and contends that "100% of parishioners should feel encouraged to participate in ministry" and that they will only feel co-responsible "if they feel involved in the major decisions that affect their parishes."

[Read more](#)

Support our work

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](#)

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

FutureChurch will host a second retreat



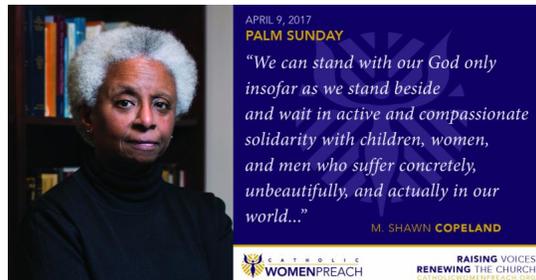
for women who are discerning a call to the diaconate September 8-10 in San Francisco, CA. This second retreat will also include a special workshop on one component of diaconal ministry: the Ministry of the Word – particularly Liturgical Preaching. Sign up today!

[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 Lent, Holy Week and the Easter, be inspired by the Catholic women who preach each Sunday and some holy and feast days.



[Learn more](#)

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FutureChurch | 17305 Madison Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio 44107 | 216.228.0869
info@futurechurch.org

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