Honor the Mary of Magdala in your life by having her name added to our list on Catholic Women Preach!

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

How many priests are still active in your diocese?

Coming next week! Get priest stats by country!

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

Did you see Joan Chittister, OSB, preaching on Catholic Women Preach this week?

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

Transitions hold the promise of new beginnings, but they are often accompanied by a sense of loss. FutureChurch's program director, Russ Petrus, will be moving toward a new role in the software development world and leaving FutureChurch as our program director. Happily, he will continue to work as our consultant on the Catholic
Women Preach initiative. We have been blessed and enriched by his service and wish him all the very best in his new endeavors.

In the meantime, we will begin a search for the next extraordinary program director. Please pass this job description along to those who might be interested. The application deadline is August 28, 2017. FutureChurch is an exciting place to work! Together with our volunteers, supporters, activists, and educators we continue to positively impact the future of the Church we love!

Some may find Peter Feuerherd’s case study and comments on healing after parish mergers/closings beneficial, but I am skeptical. I endeavor to witness to the travesty of closing and merging parishes on such a grand scale - the shutting down of the Body of Christ one parish at a time. And, there is a lot of money changing hands.

I find myself hearing echoes of fiery words in Matthew’s Gospel attributed to Jesus when speaking of the religious leaders of his day. His most cutting criticisms were aimed at those who were supposed to be God's representatives and pastors.

In a world that needs the Gospel more than ever and laborers who are nourished in Eucharistic communities in order to carry out that work, I dig in my heals when others, no matter how credentialed, try to normalize a
"solution" that lacks creativity and courage. When demographic shifts are used to justify the bishops' "solution", we have to ask if we would close all these parishes if there were enough priests. I think we know the answer.

In the fourteenth century, when the church was in tatters, Catherine of Siena challenged Catholic leaders. She even 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

Beloved priest, friend, and reformer; Capuchin Michael Crosby dies

Michael Crosby was a beloved friend of FutureChurch. He worked in circles large and small to develop the relationships he believed were reflected in the Trinity.
Brian Rowe wrote an inspiring reflection on his life as a man who could talk to corporate giants and ordinary Catholics of all stripes.

Rowe writes, "The Capuchin friar believed deeply in the prospects of engagement over other strategies, such as divestment, that maintaining, and building, a relationship with companies over time could lead to positive results. He stressed patience and persistence, and had a reputation for viewing those across the table from him as people, not just the corporation they represented."

Read more

**Lay ecclesial ministry is backbone of church: nearly 40,000 lay ministers: 66% are women**

According to a new report by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the importance of lay ecclesial ministers to the life and work of the Church in the United States is illustrated by the fact that nearly 40,000 are currently ministering in parishes nationwide. Of that number, two-thirds are women and sixty-one percent are in their forties or fifties. Thirty percent in under the age of 40.

In 2016-2017 CARA identified 202 active lay ecclesial ministry formation programs. The number enrolled in degree and certificate programs for 2016-2017 is 19,969. Of that number, 75% are working toward a certificate
in ministry and 25% are working toward a graduate degree. The total number of enrollees represents a 16 percent decrease from the previous year.

CARA urges that the church understand the importance of parish ministers having access to the best possible academic preparation and personal formation. (The CARA Report, Vol. 23 No. 1)

**LCWR President: We are called to remake religious life**

President of LCWR, Mary Pelligrino, CSJ, addressed 800 leaders saying, "Our own grief is a gateway to grace, not only for ourselves, but for our world. The grace that will come from embracing this paschal narrative of communion will be costly, but it will not diminish us," Pellegrino said. "It will take our best energy and will not consume us. It will open us to the vitality that lies deep at the heart of communion with God, with another and with the wider world. It will help us to speak new languages, and apprehend new images and tell new stories."
"It will remake us. And while it is remaking us, we will remake the world."

[Read more](#)

**Future president of LCWR is an agent of change**

On Aug. 12, 2016, Sr. Teresa Maya was chosen as president-elect of LCWR, joining the presidential triumvirate with St.
Joseph Sr. Mary Pellegrino as president and St. Joseph Sr. Marcia Allen as past-president.

This responsibility was in addition to her role as congregational leader for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, a four-year term that began in 2014. "When I look back on the last few years, I realize my ministry is no longer education. It's religious life itself: ensuring its viability, ensuring it stays focused on its mission, our own kind of love for our own life" she said. "It's been a new learning. As I had to learn to be principal, I had to learn this is a calling."

Read more
See Sr. Maya preach for Catholic Women Preach

Pay gaps exist for those working for the Church

Michael O'Loughlin reports on CARA's study of salaries and benefits in the Catholic Church for administrative personnel, priests, and lay ministers.

O'Loughlin writes that, according to the report, a large gap exists between the median salaries of administrative positions and pastoral positions.

Read more

Also read Nicole Sotelo's report The Church's wage gap

New to FutureChurch Website! The latest priest statistics by country!
the Apostolate reports that in the last year the number of Catholics in the world increased along with the number of bishops, deacons, and graduate level seminarians. But the number of priests, religious sisters, and religious brothers declined (Vol. 23 No.1)

Next week FutureChurch will provide the unique opportunity to see the current priest statistics by country.

Stay tuned!

CARA believes Sherry A. Weddell's book presents solutions for the future of the church

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate writes that Forming Intentional Disciples by Sherry Weddell may hold an important key to rejuvenating the church. Weddell says there is a chasm "the size of the Grant Canyon" between the Church's theology of the lay apostolate and the lived spiritual experience of the majority of Catholics.

Most Catholics, even active Catholics, are at the "early, essentially passive" stage of spiritual development." According to Weddell this learned passivity has "shaped our community culture, pastoral assumptions and pastoral practices with devastating results."

"Many pastoral leaders do not even possess a conceptual category for discipleship," says Weddell.

That means the Church's
teachings on the theology of the laity and on social justice and evangelization are "dead letters" for the majority of Catholics.

To overcome the discipleship deficit, Weddell proposes five thresholds for conversion:

1. Initial trust
2. Spiritual curiosity
3. Spiritual openness
4. Spiritual seeking
5. Intentional discipleship

(The CARA Report, Vol. 23 No.1)

Tens of millions of dollars to be made on shuttered churches under Cardinal Dolan's watch

The New York Times reports that the rusted gates at the Catholic Church of St. John the Martyr in Manhattan remained padlocked on Sunday, as they have since the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York closed them for the last time in 2015.

This year would have been the church’s 130th anniversary as a house of worship, but the Church of St. John the Martyr is sacred no more.

The church, on East 72nd Street on the Upper East Side, was one of 18 shuttered churches that the archdiocese deconsecrated recently, paving the way for the properties to be repurposed or sold, which appraisers say would bring tens of millions of dollars to church coffers.

Read more

Jennifer Mertens asks if Christianity has a "Wonder
Jennifer Mertens, M.Div, teaches religion at an all girls' high school and was surprised by her own hunger for the Wonder Woman story.

She writes that I've watched "Wonder Woman" three times now in theaters and still can't get enough. Returning home, I eagerly research trailer clips, cast interviews and box office statistics — totally fascinated by a movie that reflects something I've never quite seen, and a message I can't fully describe. I'm not the person you would expect to write a column about this character or movie, Wonder Woman. I can't pretend to be a comic book fan or superhero guru. My husband spent weeks just trying to convince me to see the movie for the first time. At that point, my knowledge of Wonder Woman was limited to the Wonder Woman T-shirts that some colleagues and I once wore for Halloween — and which I now regret giving away!

As one of millions who have been introduced (or reintroduced) to Wonder Woman as a contemporary cultural icon, I have been surprised by my own hunger for her story, and by the extent to which this hunger is evidently shared around the world, by women and girls, and also men and boys.

Read more

**Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland opposes Archbishop's move to implement the male-only**
The Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) is in full support of a parish priest in the Irish town of Limerick who has publicly opposed moves by his Cashel and Emly archdiocese to have male-only deacons.

Father Roy Donovan, parish priest of Caherconlish in County Limerick, objected to the decision by Archbishop Kieran O’Reilly of Cashel and Emly, to introduce male-only permanent diaconate in the archdiocese, reports *The Irish Times*.

“Roy’s objection is based on the fact that currently, the church confines the lay diaconate to men, even though Pope Francis has a commission working on the history of women deacons in the early church, with a view to possibly opening the diaconate to women also,” the association said in a statement appearing in *The Irish Times*.

“We would further call on every diocese in the country to hold off on the introduction of the permanent diaconate until such time as the Vatican commission reports, and Pope Francis makes a decision based on that report,” it said.

“We believe that proceeding with the introduction of male deacons at this time, and thereby adding another male clerical layer to ministry, is insensitive, disrespectful of women and counter-productive at this present critical time,” the
Curing clericalism

Fr. Peter Day writes that it is sad to admit, but the evidence is clear. The church in Australia is sick to its institutional core. It has a nasty, though treatable cancer that is being fed by a pervasive clericalism. While most of the offenders are actually Religious, they share a culture in Australia with that created by bishops and priests.

Together they were the heroes of a tribalized and excessively ritualized Catholicism that came from Ireland: a hard culture that was spiritually superficial, authoritarian, Papalist and clerical, sweetened only by charity and piety.

However, unless treated aggressively and decisively, the cancer will metastasize – and the church will continue to be one that re-crucifies Christ over and over: just ask the children and their families who’ve been scourged and nailed to crosses by religious brutes and cowards. So, where to from here? How to reclaim the servant leadership of Christ?

The post-Vatican II Church that gives some converts a disproportionate voice

Massimo Faggioli wipes away binary comparisons and describes the complexities of today's Catholic conversions.
He writes that the public face of what I have called here “the convert movement” (implying an analogy with other, previous movements of Catholic renewal) is a largely conservative group of converts that seems to have disproportionate representation and voice in comparison to the larger number of recent converts to Catholicism; these are the ones who seem to be finding an easier welcome into a Church that they then go and criticize. They have not faced the same kind of scrutiny or lengthy test and evaluation that groups with a visible and recognized leader and a unified culture and structure faced in the post-Vatican II Church, especially until the end of the pontificate of Paul VI (the example of Communion and Liberation in Italy is paradigmatic on this front). They have taken a space of their own because they have been able to claim it in a way that was not possible until recently. The weaknesses of Catholic ecclesiology that some converts now denounce as post-Vatican II illnesses are actually the same weaknesses that have made it easy (institutionally and theologically) for them to be accepted in the Catholic Church.

The post-Vatican II Church some like to criticize is precisely the post-Vatican II Church that made their conversions so seamless. The post-Vatican II Church they don’t like may in fact be their own.

Read more

The Spiritual Cost of Scandal
Rita Ferrone is troubled by her own reactions to stories of scandal. Upon reading about charges of corruption against Cardinal-elect Jean Zerbo, she immediately assumed he was guilty.

"I noted my gut reaction with chagrin, but there it was. So pervasive has clerical scandal been in my lifetime, including cases of mismanagement of church funds, it was only too easy to believe him guilty. Easier, in fact, than to imagine he was innocent. And I had just finished praising these cardinals as men of integrity who exhibited virtue! I felt cheated, taken in. I had trusted too much in the glowing reports I had read. I ought to have been more cynical."

Read more

Archbishop says decentralization plan will empower laity in governance roles

Archbishop Leo Cushley has unveiled radical plans to strip down the curia of St Andrews & Edinburgh Archdiocese to empower priests and laity to evangelise their local communities.

The present set-up will be replaced by a decentralised model where the curia will exist primarily to fulfil those tasks required by canon or civil law that cannot be done at a local or deanery level.

“It’s now four years since Pope
Francis sent me here with a mandate to reform and renew the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh so that we could more effectively share the joy of the Gospel—this announcement is a significant step towards that,” Archbishop Cushley said, adding that after much observation, thought and prayerful discernment, he had ‘decided that this is the way in which I wish to move forward as we endeavour to build and live a Vatican II Church.’

A consultative archdiocesan pastoral council will be established to bring lay expertise and clerical advisors into the decision-making process in five areas: justice and peace, catechetics, marriage and the family, ecumenism and inter-faith relations, and care of the clergy and religious.

Read more

What will Pope Francis do with Cardinal Burke?

Robert Mickens offers a few suggestions for what could happen to Cardinal Burke.

He writes that there have been reports in the past several days that the Vatican is moving closer to rehabilitating the Priestly Society of St Pius X (SSPX), the schismatic ultra-traditionalist group founded by the late-Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

The idea is that it would eventually be made into a personal prelature, that strange canonical creature that was invented for Opus Dei during
John Paul II’s pontificate. In exchange, the SSPX would likely have to agree to stop criticizing the Church reforms and changes (including the liturgy) that came during and after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Then the Lefebvrist would become similar to other smaller, more disparate groups of Neo-Tridentinist Catholics (that are in communion with Rome). These are the ones a certain German theologian-pope helped spawn these past several decades. Their members formally profess acceptance of Vatican II, but then continue their retrodox way of Church life as if the Council never happened.

If Pope Francis were to put all such groups under one personal prelature, it would be interesting to see how quickly it started tearing itself apart and hemorrhaging members. (Think of what’s happened in the Anglican Ordinariate).

But Francis could also go one step further than his saintly Polish predecessor and add another rung of episcopal authority to this curious ecclesiastical structure. He could call it a *cardinalis patronus* or whatever else he wants.

At any rate, he’s already found a good candidate for the job – Cardinal Raymond Burke.

Read more

The wrong message on media
Robert Mickens believes Pope Francis missed a golden opportunity. It was the chance to use his annual World Communications Day message to speak out strongly against a growing and worrying phenomenon in the media – namely, people (including and, perhaps, especially politicians like US President Donald Trump) who deliberately invent “facts” and tell outright lies as if they were the truth.

Instead, the pope’s message was an appeal to media professionals (and anyone else involved in what it calls “grinding out information with the aim of providing rich fare for those with whom they communicate”) to “break the vicious circle of anxiety and stem the spiral of fear resulting from a constant focus on ‘bad news’ (wars, terrorism, scandals and all sorts of human failure)”.

**Diocese helps women in Kashmir stand up for their rights**

Darshana Devi, in India's northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, recalls the ordeal of trying to find out why her name disappeared from the records of a government scheme providing monthly pensions to destitute widows.

The 56-year-old, from isolated Dansal village, lost her husband 15 years ago, but her monthly pension of 1,500 rupees
(US$23) kept the rice pot boiling. She was never told why she was removed from the beneficiary list in 2014. Repeated attempts to solve the riddle failed, she told ucanews.com.

After suffering hardship, Devi came to know about a program run by Jammu-Srinagar Diocese's Catholic Social Service Society under which village women are trained to press for their rights and entitlements. The diocese covers the entire Jammu and Kashmir state.

Read more
NPR story

**Pope Francis puts his trust in the sensus fidei**

According to Christopher Lamb of The Tablet, whether it's listing their “spiritual diseases” or denouncing them for living like princes, throughout his papacy Francis has been tough on any priest or bishop he thinks is clinging on to old privileges and rigid certainties.

Lamb says this papacy has put its trust in the faith of the people, the *sensus fidei.*

Read more (subscription link)

**Second in command at Secretariat for Communications has skills but not a fan of Francis**

Robert Mickens reports that Mgr Lucio Ruiz, the second-in-command at the Secretariat for Communications, is from Argentina like Pope Francis. He’s worked in the Vatican since
1997 in the former Internet office where he became the social media whiz kid for Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, the archconservative former prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy.

The 52-year-old priest – like a few of Francis’ other compatriots who’ve had long careers in the Roman Curia – never seemed to be a great fan of the pope when he was still just the cardinal-archbishop of Buenos Aires. According to a well-sourced anecdote, when the new pope met with Vatican media officials on March 16, 2013 – just three days after his election as Bishop of Rome – he greeted Mgr Ruiz, a priest from Argentina’s Archdiocese of Santa Fe, like this:

“Ah, Lucio! Now that I’m the pope are you going to say nice things about me?”

And yet the pope appointed his fellow countryman to be Mgr Dario Viganò’s right-hand man in the overhaul of the Vatican’s diverse operations in the communications and media sector.

Read more

In case you missed it: When the clergy are the 1%

The incisive blogger who writes "Questions from a Ewe" ponders an invitation she received from the Pontifical North American College to join their exorbitantly priced pilgrimage.

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

Please support this work!

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Learn what you can do to save your parish community

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

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Register for CTA East Coast Conference in Baltimore, MD

October 20 - 21, 2017

For more information contact: Ryan Sattler, CTA MD Chair
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