Your support makes our common work for change in the Church we love possible! Donate $125 or more and receive a copy of Sr. Chris Schenk's groundbreaking book, Crispina and Her Sisters!

**FutureChurch Teleconference Series continues! Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life**

- Jamie Manson
  *The Future of Religious Life*
  Jan 17, 2018, 8pm ET
  SIGN UP

- Chris Lowney
  *Everybody Leads*
  Feb 8, 2018, 8pm ET
  SIGN UP

- Fr. Joseph Healy, MM
  *Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine*
  March, 2018, 8pm ET
  SIGN UP

Start a conversation about women deacons with DeaconChat!

From the Executive Director's Desk
While conducting some research for our #CatholicToo initiative, I came across a song written by Alana Levandoski entitled, "When God Imagined Me." It struck a deep chord.

For women who have internalized the misogynous stereotypes buried deep within our tradition's patriarchal roots, these words are healing and sacramental.

*When God imagined me*
*The Trinity was in harmony*
*I was no afterthought, no oversight*
*No spare rib and no red light*
*When God imagined me*
*The gathering infinity*
*Was still gathering and all was right*
*It was good and I was Light*
*When God imagined me*

FutureChurch continues its decades-long tradition of advocating for Women in Church Leadership with a new initiative, **Feminism and Faith in Union**.

The event is the collaborative work of The Women Who Stayed, a ministry of the Church of St. Francis Xavier, FutureChurch, Women's Ordination Conference, and Call To Action.

Feminism and Faith in Union is both an event and part of a larger movement of women and men celebrating the power of feminist activism and sacrament.

I was especially moved by something one of the originators of the Feminism and Faith event, theologian Dr. Lizzie Berne.
DeGear, wrote. Her witnesses to the love we share for the Church as well as our fervent desire to be the community God dreamed we could be is powerful.

*The great religious traditions of our globe are all rooted in faith and compassion. Collectively, they tie us to our past, and they have power to influence our future.*

*Just as our religions reflect the human desire for divine wisdom, love, and justice, so they also bear witness to our human limitations. Institutions tend to grow more slowly than individuals, and so it is always actual people, working and praying together within religious institutions, who bear the responsibility for the healthy change and growth of their religion.*

*Each religion on our planet has had to wrestle with this process of growth. Ancient scriptures make reference to atrocities -- such as slavery -- that these same religions now condemn. So let it be with misogyny.*

*At this point in human history, we are called to gaze clear-eyed upon our religious traditions and see the stamp of ancient misogyny. The time is coming, and is now here, to take responsibility for all the ways this misogyny infiltrated the formation of our earliest scriptures and doctrines, and how it continues to infect the lives of our religious institutions and the people who believe in*
Sexual abuse, the withholding of formal education from girls, shaming people into silence and self-hatred, and institutional power structures that enforce male supremacy are all fruits of misogyny.

Today we have the clarity to see that these atrocities have nothing to do with divine wisdom, love and justice. We see that the essentials of our religious truths are no more bound by sexism than they are by any other misunderstanding that humanity is slowly, painfully growing out of over the course of time.

The blessing is this: for every mistake of misogyny to be found in our religious traditions, there is even greater wisdom and truth. It is our responsibility to courageously shine light on our own religious traditions, to fearlessly name the mistakes of misogyny, and to trust the treasure house of our faith to survive as we move forward.

And so today, we gather as an interfaith family to claim feminism as a deep organizing principle of our religious traditions. As feminists of faith, we know that misogyny masked as morality will not stand. We will not tolerate it, and we pledge to help the religious traditions we believe in grow beyond it.

Lizzie’s witness evokes deep gratitude in my own heart. It is truly an honor and joy to work
with Catholic sisters and brothers whose love and hope for the Church remains constant because it is rooted in God's own dream for humanity.

To learn more about this event and effort or to organize your own January 21st event go to www.feminism-faith.org.

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

On January 21, Feminism and Faith in Union invites Catholics and interfaith allies to celebrate the power of activism and sacrament for today!

Inspired by the global women’s marches one year ago, and eager to share an infusion of feminist energy and truth with the Roman Catholic Church and religious institutions around the world, The Women Who Stayed, FutureChurch, Women’s Ordination Conference, and Call To Action announce the launch of Feminism & Faith in Union.

Feminism & Faith in Union is an invitation to Catholic women and men and interfaith allies in the United States and around the globe to gather on Sunday, January 21, 2018 in prayer, song, and marches bringing feminism to their faith and faith to their feminism.

How to participate

1. Share your voice! Download our sign, personalize it and send it to us to share on our website and on our
Facebook page. Use the hashtag #CatholicToo.

2. Join the march at Union Square in New York City on January 21. Find details here.

3. Organize a march and/or liturgy in your community or parish. Find resources here.

4. Join marches that are already happening in your region while bearing witness to your own Catholic identity. Find templates for hand held signs here. Find resources for holding your own event.

Share your ideas, events, and photos on our Facebook page.

Cardinal Tobin: Women should make their truth known

In light of the #MeToo movement, Cardinal Tobin believes women should continue to speak up. In an interview with Kimberly F. Baker, Cardinal Joseph Tobin says that his hope is that Pope Francis is not just going to be content with a sort of ideology, because, as he says in “The Joy of the Gospel,” the reality is much more important than ideas.

According to Tobin, "If I were speaking to him in American English, I would say 'Eventually you have to hike the ball.' You have to connect some concrete choices with what you’re talking about."

He credits Pope Francis for creating the commission and including strong leaders such as Phyllis Zagano on board.
In terms of diocesan level leadership for women, Tobin states that a study was done by CARA, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, on the role of women in diocesan leadership.

According to Tobin, "One of the assumptions of the study was if you take orders off the table, what are the most significant or incisive positions for women at the diocesan level? They named three: the chancellor, the superintendent of schools and the chief financial officer. In Indianapolis, no credit to me but to my good predecessor, two out of the three were women. I always used to kid the C.F.O., who was a man. I said, 'You know, we could go three for three!' The chancellor and the superintendent of schools certainly brought to that level gifts and insights without which we would have been impoverished otherwise."

Read more

**Women religious get real about their own part in racism**

When historian Shannen Dee Williams took the stage at the 2016 Leadership Conference of Women Religious national assembly in Atlanta, she had already been working on her book about anti-black racism among Catholic sisters in the United States — *Subversive Habits: Black Nuns and the Long Struggle to Desegregate Catholic America* — for nine years.

Yet it wasn't until this particular
presentation on the ways black women have been excluded from and mistreated by predominantly white religious congregations that white sisters really became familiar with her work. Once she left the stage, Williams said, the invitations to cull previously inaccessible archival material started rolling in.

As of fall 2017, five congregations have opened up their archives to Williams: the Sisters of Mercy, the Dominican Sisters of Peace, the Sisters of Charity of New York, the Loretto Community and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania. In fact, so much new information became available that Williams had to postpone the deadline for her book.

Read more

A brief history of Cardinal Law’s life and downfall

Thomas Reese, SJ writes that Cardinal Bernard Law’s life is a cautionary tale of what can happen to an ambitious cleric who loses sight of his duty to serve the people of God.

According to Reese, Law began as a reformer who was active in the Civil Rights movement and other causes for justice. But over the years, he mutated from a collaborator to a manipulator who chose to protect the institution and himself over the children in his own diocese. He obstructed justice and thwarted the Gospel. In the end he lost the confidence and respect of
The Australians get it wrong on the connection between celibacy and clergy sex abuse

Thomas Reese, SJ gets it right when he points out that anyone committed to the protection of children should carefully study the important report by the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

But, he also states that they should question some of the recommendations made regarding celibacy as the root of the problem.

The commission said the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should press the Holy See “to consider introducing voluntary celibacy for diocesan clergy” and argued that “compulsory celibacy (for clergy) and vowed chastity (for members of religious institutes) have contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse, especially when combined with other risk factors.”

The report also says that “compulsory celibacy may also have contributed to various forms of psychosexual dysfunction, including psychosexual immaturity, which pose an ongoing risk to the safety of children.”

Reese, like many other experts, supports voluntary celibacy for diocesan clergy, but not as a
solution to the sexual abuse crisis. The impact of celibacy on sexual abuse has not been proved. The commission reports that 7 percent of the Australian Catholic clergy were abusers. That means 93 percent were not. What are the comparable numbers for other groups of men such as noncelibate religious leaders, coaches, teachers, day care workers, scout leaders and staff of residential institutions?

Read more

US Bishops cautious about liturgical reform

Ruth Gledhill writes that the U.S. Bishops have stated that they have a right to revise the liturgy under Pope Francis's new motu proprio, but are asking why they should.

According to Gledhill, Catholic bishops have the right to propose revisions to translations of the Roman Missal currently in use, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

However, "prudential" questions should be asked about the need to do that, and "whether it would be worth the time and expense" such a project would require, according to the latest newsletter from the US bishops committee on divine worship.

The US bishops have looked at the issue of the current translation of the Missal in the light of a 26 September letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship that
was interpreted by the bishops of England and Wales as ruling out an alternative to the current, 2010 translation of the Missal, because it indicates that the moto proprio Magnum Principum, devolving control of liturgical translations to local bishops' conferences "is not retroactive."

The bishops of England and Wales had been under considerable pressure to take another look at the 1998 Missal translation that was approved by all English-speaking bishops' conferences but rejected by Rome over concerns about the closeness of the translation to the original Latin, in accordance with the 2001 instruction Liturgiam authenticam.

**The Mass translation: How we arrived**

Dan Horan, OFM, expertly summarizes the work of renowned systematic theologian Gerald O'Collins, S.J., and John Wilkins, former editor of the British weekly The Tablet.

According to Horan, their book, *Lost in Translation: The English Language and the Catholic Mass*, give an accessible, exciting, informative and virtually unassailable account (historically, theologically and linguistically) of how we have come to receive this liturgical translation that has given us "the dewfall," "for many," "under my roof" and "with your spirit," among other challenging expressions, each time we gather to celebrate the
Horan asks, "So what are we to do in the wake of this admittedly poor English translation of the Missal now seven years on?"

He reports that O’Collins and Wilkins suggest dusting off the 1998 ICEL revised translation that the CDW never allowed to see the light of day. The product of decades of work, accomplished by the best researchers, liturgists, theologians and translators, there already exists an English translation “waiting in the wings.” Given Pope Francis’s recent motu proprio (September 3, 2017), which restores to the local bishops’ conferences responsibility for translations, it isn’t too late to reclaim liturgical language that is more prayerful, understandable and theologically sound. But this will require humility and courage on the part of the episcopal conferences, which will have to concede first that the 2010 translation was misguided.

Read more

Youth want to see more space for women and LBGT people

James Roberts reports in The Tablet that if you want to know what Catholic youth in Africa and the U.S. think about the church in the lead up to the 2018 synod, you can thank Fr. Joseph Healy and his team for their leadership.

Fr Healey reported finding dedicated young people on “both ends of the spectrum”: “On the
right young people are deeply spiritual (devoted to the rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, practices of piety). An increasing number of student groups are evangelical Catholics. On the left young people are deeply involved in social justice, advocacy and service projects.”

The survey found favourite discussion topics in the YSCC meetings, that took place from 2013 to 2017, included: relationships with the opposite sex; sexuality; dating; fashion; popular music; video games; social networks; information technology; sport; and the use of leisure time.

Among spiritual concerns they listed: searching for one’s human and Christian identity; self-discovery in a faith-sharing context; and vocational discernment (covering both religious vocations and vocations in the secular world). Career planning, job hunting and employment challenges were preoccupations, but justice and peace issues, good causes, and community service were also important.

Bible study was a major demand, partly to enable young Catholics to answer challenges from their Protestant friends, especially Pentecostals. Recent research indicates this is the main reason that African Catholic youth want to learn more about the Bible. The teachings of the Catholic Church were also highlighted in this context. Long range goals included how to achieve financial
success as well as how to develop fundraising skills.

Communications problems between young people and their parents were often referred to, while political discussions were frequent and questions of African ethnic and cultural identity were equally of interest.

A similar survey was conducted with college students in the United States from 2014 to 2017. Fr Healey and his team spoke to students from Boston College, DePaul, Duquesne, Georgetown, Loyola New Orleans, Morgan State, Notre Dame, Princeton, Santa Clara, Stanford, Williams and Yale. The most recent “Listening Sessions” were at Georgetown in September 2017 and at Loyola in November 2017.

In general students were very positive regarding Pope Francis’ efforts to reach out to young people but for many the “Institutional Church” was not welcoming or nourishing. Many asked whether the “official” Church (the Vatican and the bishops) really wanted to listen to the concerns of young people, especially in the areas of sexuality and personal relationships.

The strength and influence of Catholic Social Teaching was undermined for many young people in the US by the Church’s perceived intransigence on women’s and LGBTQ issues. They felt the Church had a long way to go with regard to the empowerment of women.
There was however an evident zeal for liturgy through youth choirs and praise music. Many college students were simply not concerned about social justice issues in the Catholic Church. Small faith communities were seen as a safe space to share faith and reflect on “real” issues that included questions about the body including the "Theology of the Body" and what beauty means. The Church could also do more, young people felt, in facing up to issues of immigration, poverty and racism. The stresses of college life including pressure of exams were often mentioned, but also financial pressures including repayment of student loans and finding a job after college.

Read more

Choppy waters ahead for Francis according to Marco Politi

Marco Politi of The Tablet writes that looking back to the first part of the Francis papacy, some impressive results were achieved. The reform of the Curia continues, and the central government of the Church has become somewhat slimmer. This was one of the major issues that the cardinals raised during their official pre-conclave meetings prior to Francis’ election.

Six former pontifical councils (Laity, Family, Justice and Peace, Cor Unum, Migrants, Health Care Workers) have been merged into two dicasteries: one for Laity, Family and Life, under Cardinal Kevin Farrell, and one for Promoting Integral Human Development, under Cardinal Peter Turkson. It means a Roman Curia
with fewer “princes” in purple. Meanwhile, a cautious decentralisation has begun. Local bishops now have the right, under some circumstances, to declare a marriage null without needing the approval of Rome. Bishops’ conferences have the right to revise liturgical texts without waiting for the formal approval (recognitio) of Rome: a ratification (confirmatio) is enough. And, in the wake of the Jubilee of Mercy, priests all over the world – not just ones chosen by local bishops – are now authorised to grant absolution to those who confess to having procured an abortion: including even the schismatic clerics of the Pius X fraternity.

Women – although still too few of them – have moved into the high ranks of the Curia. Gabriella Gambino, a professor of bioethics, and Judge Linfa Ghisoni were appointed last November as undersecretaries at the new Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life. The academic and former US ambassador to the Holy See, Mary Ann Glendon, is a member of the board of the Vatican bank. The British social theorist, Margaret Archer, is president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. The commission on women deacons has silently sent the Pope its conclusions; he is currently studying them.

Francis has also moved to implement the wishes of the cardinal-electors with regard to the Istituto per le Opere di Religione (IOR), better known as the Vatican bank.
Christa Pongrantz-Lippit writes that Cardinal Gerhard Müller continues to show signs of bitterness and defiance towards Pope Francis a full six months after being let go as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

The cardinal, who marked his 70th birthday on the final day of 2017, did little to hide his dissatisfaction with the pope in one of his most recent interviews — a full-page spread in the New Year’s issue of the German quality weekly, Die Zeit. The conversation began with the interviewer noting that Pope Francis, in his annual Christmas address to the Roman Curia, had castigated those who, “when they are delicately removed, erroneously declare themselves martyrs of the system.”

The cardinal was asked if he felt the pope was talking about him. “Quite certainly not,” was Müller’s emphatic reply. “I have neither declared myself a martyr nor was I ‘delicately’ removed from any — which or whatever — ‘system.’ Christians become martyrs with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and not by declaring themselves martyrs, and, through baptism and confirmation, I belong to Jesus Christ’s Church and not to any man-made system,” he declared defiantly.

Read more

More bishops resist Amoris Laetitia
Catholic News Service reports that more bishops are resisting *Amoris Laetitia*.

In Kazakhstan, "divorced people living with someone else would not dare ask for holy Communion because they know they are living in a situation of sin. It would be blasphemy," said Auxiliary Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Astana.

Archbishop Tomash Peta of Astana, Bishop Schneider and retired Archbishop Jan Pawel Lenga of Karaganda published a statement on "the immutable truths about sacramental marriage" in late December. Bishop Schneider told Catholic News Service in Rome Jan. 4 that their statement was in response to some bishops' conferences issuing norms and guidelines that foresee the possibility of a divorced and civilly remarried Catholic returning to the sacraments. The norms and guidelines are the bishops' responses to Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, "Amoris Laetitia."

But the three bishops from Kazakhstan said in their statement that no bishop or group of bishops has the authority to authorize Communion for Catholics who are divorced and remarried unless the couple has received an annulment or has made a sincere pledge to abstain from sexual relations.

An Italian website reported Jan. 3 that Italian Archbishop Luigi
Negri, the retired archbishop of Ferrara-Comacchio, and Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, the former nuncio to the United States, had endorsed the statement of the three Kazakhstan bishops.

**Humanae Vitae: The Enthusiasm Gap**

Massimo Faggioli writes that regarding the 50th anniversary of Humanae Vitae, the preparations to mark this anniversary suggest we will see yet more signs of tension in how different Catholics (culturally and geographically) understand Catholicism.

Based on the program they released at their November gathering in Baltimore, for example, the U.S. bishops are far more excited about celebrating the anniversary of Humanae Vitae than their counterparts in the rest of the world, who seem to be looking at marriage and family with a different kind of focus. And this “enthusiasm gap” is reflective of more than just the present moment; it suggests continuation of the skirmishes within the Church that have persisted through Francis’s papacy.

It began within a few months of Francis’s election, with his decision to pull back on the obsessive emphasis on sexuality. It was not just an argument e silentio (from silence) but stated explicitly, several times in the years to
There was the interview with Antonio Spadaro, SJ, editor of La Civiltà Cattolica in September 2013; there was his decision to call the Bishops’ Synods of 2014 and 2015 on family and marriage; there was the publication of Amoris Laetitia “on love in the family” (not just on marriage) in the spring of 2016.

In the summer of 2016, Francis cemented his pastoral take on family and marriage with the creation of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and with new appointments for the Pontifical Academy for Life and the John Paul II Institute for marriage and family.

In 2017, there was the establishment of the Pontifical Theological Institute John Paul II for the Sciences of Marriage and Family at the Lateran University in Rome, replacing the institution created by John Paul II. More directly related to Humanae Vitae was the creation in July 2017 of a special commission to study the history of the drafting of the encyclical. This commission has been given a waiver from the seventy-year rule regarding accessing of documents, so that it can examine those from the commission that prepared Humanae Vitae, which are kept in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Secretariat of State.
Wales parishioners fight closure

A church in Wales, which recently marked its centenary with a Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Wrexham, Peter Brignall, is to close in February, he has announced.

Parishioners at St Michael & All Angels Church in Conwy spoke of their “devastation” after a letter was read out, the weekend before Christmas, announcing the last Mass would take place there on 11 February. Parishioners have said the announcement marred their Christmas and they are preparing to appeal the decision under canon law.

In a statement to The Tablet, Bishop Brignall expressed regret that such decisions had to be made – but also sadness at declining congregations, fewer baptisms and minimal vocations from the native families of the diocese. “On the Sunday that my message was read, an 82-year-old retired priest was celebrating three parish Masses to cover for a priest who had been taken ill and hospitalised the previous day,” the statement said. “I do not like having to make such decisions, but we have to consolidate our resources and stand firm for the centrality of the Mass in the Catholic Church.”

In the letter that was read out, Bishop Brignall argued that “restructuring of parishes and closure of churches” would ensure Mass could be celebrated
in each remaining church every Sunday – but also warned of further pain: “This process is not yet complete and there are more closures to come as needs demand.” He has previously announced plans to close around 20 of Wrexham diocese’s 62 churches by 2020.

Parishioner Anne McCaffrey, took issue with what she saw as a rebuke to people who object to the changes, when Bishop Brignall referred in his letter to being “grateful” to those who have accepted his decisions about closures and have “worked hard to build a new way for the Lord to enter their own and their parish lives”. Ms McCaffrey said people were being chastised for not being subservient – and to describe the Conwy closure as horrific would be an understatement. “No one in the diocese is answering any questions about what will happen to this sacred building,” she said. “Why can’t they treat people with dignity and respect? The decision is poor and the process is appalling.”

Read more (subscription link)

Swiss Church still dealing with clergy sex abuse

Some 250 cases of sexual harassment within the Catholic church in Switzerland have been reported since 2010, according to media reports. A sizeable number involve abuse cases against adults.

The information was first revealed on Wednesday on local
radio station Rhône FM, and was reported again in several Sunday newspapers.

According to Le Matin Dimanche, which followed up on statistics released by the Conference of Swiss Bishops, some 10% of the 250 incidents have taken place since 2010; the rest date back as far as 1950.

Some 143 cases involve children and adolescents, while 88 concern abuse of adults, the paper says. These latter include allegations ranging from inappropriate touching to rape. Slightly more women were affected than men.

The paper reported several examples. In one case, a woman visiting her priest for comfort during a difficult period was sexually aggressed and eventually became pregnant as a result. The priest convinced her to have an abortion.

Read more

A French Response to the Dubia

Celine Hoyeau writes that Pope Francis’ exhortation on the family, Amoris Laetitia, particularly Chapter 8 dealing with the accompaniment of people living in “irregular” situations, has given rise to a great deal of criticism from a number of Catholic commentators since its publication in March 2016. In one well-known incident, four cardinals issued an open letter to Pope Francis calling on him to respond to their “dubia” or
doubts over the document in which the pontiff appeared to open up the possibility of communion for remarried divorcees in certain situations.

Did this not contradict Pope John Paul II’s teaching expressed in the encyclical Veritas Splendor stating that intrinsically sinful actions exist, which cannot be excused by circumstance or intention and which therefore prevent access to the sacraments?

This raised the question whether Amoris Laetitia broke with or was in continuity with Pope John Paul on these issues. In their self-styled “ecumenical” book Une morale souple mais non sans boussole: Répondre aux doutes des quatre cardinaux à propos d'Amoris laetitia, the authors, Alain Thomasset, a Jesuit specialist on the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Miguel Garrigues, a Dominican expert on St Thomas Aquinas, address these issues point by point.

Amoris Laetitia does not lessen the universality of the norms recalled by John Paul II, they argue with great finesse and pedagogy.

Rather, the apostolic exhortation specifies its field of application and restores the role of moral discernment “on a case by case basis” to its rightful place inherited from the great tradition of the church.

Read more

Archbishop Wilton Gregory on
John Gehring interviewed Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta on the challenge of racism in society and in the Church.

Gregory stated, "Like any other spiritual transformation or renewal, conversion must begin with an honest and a sincere admission that we need God’s transformative power in our lives to achieve any real change, no matter the perspective from which we might begin. As in a twelve-step program, we must acknowledge that we are powerless without God’s intervention. Conversion calls us to honesty of heart. Each one of us must ask how we contribute to the racist climate that seems only to grow stronger in spite of our best efforts at legislative and social remedies. Whether we are victims of racism or its perpetrators, we must begin on our knees. The extraordinary folks of Mother Emanuel never abandoned their hurt, their anger, their sorrow, or their call for justice, but they rose above all of these by their deep and genuine gospel-formed willingness to forgive; their example should be transformative for our nation. Even before Pope Francis recently urged the people of Myanmar not to give in to anger and revenge as a response to the brutality they had faced, the holy families of Mother Emanuel modeled that exhortation for us all."

Read more
Visionary Molly Burhans maps the Catholic Church

The Boston Globe picked up a story on a the work of a young visionary Catholic woman, Molly Burhans who is using cutting-edge geographic information system software — GIS — she sought to make the first known map of the Roman Catholic Church across the world. Beginning with diocesan boundaries and adding layer upon layer of data about the church and its social and environmental contexts, she has drawn from hundreds of sources, from old books to hand-drawn maps on diocesan websites to develop a cartographical picture of the Catholic Church that could be useful for a range of social issues including the environmental impact of climate change to land use.

Read more

Victim of abuse who accused Cardinal Pell dies

Mark Brolly reports that Damian Dignan, a man who publicly accused Australian Cardinal George Pell of child sexual abuse has died following a long illness.

Dignan, a former pupil of St Alipius' Primary School in Ballarat East, was one of two men who made allegations against the Ballarat-born Cardinal on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation television program 7.30 in July 2016.
He also featured in the book, 'Cardinal: The Rise And Fall of George Pell', written by ABC journalist Louise Milligan, which has been taken off the shelves in Victoria since Cardinal Pell, 76, was charged with multiple historic sexual offences in June last year after an investigation by the Victoria Police Sano Taskforce. The Cardinal has strenuously denied the all the allegations.

Cardinal Pell, who was granted leave by Pope Francis from his role as Prefect of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy to respond to the charges, faces a four-week committal hearing in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court in March. [Read more]

**Taize: A Model for Emulation**

Could Taizé, which has been approved and encouraged for decades by successive popes despite the fact that it is not officially Catholic, eventually become a model for the Church? “Simplicity, the density of the message proposed and the righteousness and the authenticity of the lifestyle, make Taizé a model for all churches,” said Bishop Felix Gmür of Basel, a city with a highly developed ecumenical program.

Other churches also recognize the benefits of the Taizé experience.

“Young people in our church are coming back via groups like
“Taizé,” commented Sara, 32, an Egyptian Orthodox Copt, who participated along with a dozen of her compatriots.

Yet, to what extent can the Catholic Church draw on the Taizé style? The question is even more delicate since many young Catholics who participated in the European meeting often have very different views of the Church.

“When you are there, you get the impression that everything is going very well. Homosexuals are welcomed, women and young people have a place. But when we return to our parishes we realize that in fact, this does not happen,” lamented Matthias, 20, who came to Basel with a group from the Diocese of Nantes in the Loire-Atlantique region.

Read more

In case you missed it: Rolling the Stone Away

Mary Hunt writes that the “Rolling the Stone Away: Generations of Love and Justice” conference, October 30-November 2, 2017, in St. Louis gathered 250 people who reviewed the struggles to make Christian churches inclusive of persons, genders and sexual orientations. Key to the discussion was what the next generation of folks plan to do to continue the work on their terms in these complicated times.

Longtime Methodist activist Mark Bowman combined his visionary leadership with wise funders’
generous support to make this extraordinary event happen. It was a spirited reunion of veteran church activists, a real-time unfolding of an important chapter of church history, and a powerful communal act of commitment to broaden and deepen the work.

As longtime pastor Renee McCoy of the Metropolitan Community Churches said at the closing ritual, “I feel like I re-enlisted.”

The St. Louis gathering was a living tableau of the LGBTQ Religious Archives Network (LGBTRAN). The Archives Network, directed by Bowman, was founded in 2001 as a project of Chicago Theological Seminary. Since 2008, it has been part of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry in Berkeley. LGBTRAN is the go-to site for stories and information on scholars, ministers, activists, and denominational groups, many of whom assembled in St. Louis to rekindle old relationships, compare progress notes, and re-up for a new era. “History belongs to those who preserve their records” was a conference mantra as historians hastened to do oral histories and memorabilia were collected.

Moving liturgies grounded the gathering. A poignant time of remembrance and a queer All Saints service gave expression to the grief, loss, and deep appreciation that are all part of struggle.

Read more
As a criminal prosecution looms, the Vatican takes control of Catholic movement in Peru

Gerald O'Connell reports that the Vatican has announced that it has taken control of the Sodalitium of Christian Life, a society of consecrated laypeople and priests. The group was founded in Peru in 1971 by a layperson, Luis Fernando Figari, who prosecutors in Peru are now seeking to detain. The move comes just days before Pope Francis begins a visit to Chile and Peru.

Members of the leadership in the society, known by its Latin acronym S.C.V., have been accused of authoritarian lifestyles and financial mismanagement. Its founder and other leaders have been accused of sexually abusing minors in the group.

The S.C.V. includes about 20,000 members and is governed by a group of celibate laymen known as “sodalits.” According to the Holy See press office, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has appointed Msgr. Noel Antonio Londono Buitrago, bishop of Jericó, Colombia, and a member of the Redemptorist order, to oversee the society. It added that Cardinal Joseph Tobin, archbishop of Newark and also a Redemptorist, who was previously appointed by Pope Francis as a papal delegate overseeing the reform
Canadian Rosemary Ganley on the slow pace of reform

Rosemary Ganely writes that after the death of Cardinal Bernard Law, Canadian politician Charlie Angus, NDP MP from Cobalt, said the following in an anguished post:

"I learned my lessons in faith and justice in the church. I remember pastors organizing over the grape boycott for farmworkers. I was working at a Catholic Worker house when the sexual abuse scandals first came to light. They were stunning revelations, but even more stunning was to see powerful men who were supposed to follow the words of Jesus suppress, cover-up and protect serial predators. Cardinal Law was eventually brought down by a grand jury indictment, but protected by Pope John Paul II. He was a disgrace to everything Jesus stood for. Good riddance."

In Canada, we had our own searing scandal at Mount Cashel orphanage in Newfoundland 40 years ago, where 300 young persons alleged physical and sexual abuse by the Christian Brothers, cover-up by churchmen and police collusion.

Recognizing God in a new age

Nick Ripatrazzone writes about three Catholic figures, Marshall
McLuhan, Walter Ong, SJ and Andy Warhol, who took three different approaches to recognizing God in the age of digital media.

Ong, a Jesuit, asked that if our digital world is simultaneous, absolute, overwhelming in possibility, what does that mean for communion with others?

According to Ong, “The fragmentation of consciousness initiated by the alphabet has in turn been countered by the electronic media which have made man present to himself across the globe, creating an intensity of self-possession on the part of the human race which is a new, and at times an upsetting, experience. Further transmutations lie ahead.”

We are living those transmutations now, and Ong’s questions remain: “Could the cry of Nietzsche’s madman, ‘God is dead’, derive from the fact that He cannot be readily found by the old signs in the newly organized sensorium where the word stands in such different relationship to the total complex of awareness by which man earlier situated himself in his life world?” Ong and McLuhan were both observers; rather than attempting to stop the tide of electronic change, they wanted to understand its rise and fall.

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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.