Beyond the literary evidence that was predominately shaped by men, Christine Schenk, CSJ gives us a new understanding of women's authority in Early Christianity by setting her eyes (and ours) on the funerary portraits of women. Sarcophagus portraits of Christian women outnumber portraits of Christian men by three to one with females being shown with scrolls, speech gestures, and in-facing apostle figures, enhancing their ecclesial authority. Schenk shows how the funerary evidence suggests that women exercised authority to a greater degree than previously recognized (p. xix). 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**

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

- **Fr. Joseph Healey, MM**  
  **Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine**  
  March 21, 2018, 8pm ET  
  [SIGN UP]

Listen to Jamie Manson's teleconference on the future of religious life

Start a conversation about women deacons with
From the Executive Director's Desk

As I write this short piece, I am sitting at the bedside, keeping vigil, as my dear friend and mentor, Sr. Louise Akers, SC, gets nearer to the end of her life.

I am heartbroken.

I don't want to be in a world without Louise Akers, but I have little choice.

Still, I am taking in the grace that is Louise -- her holy presence -- in this humble, practical room that is equipped for her most basic end-of-life needs.

Louise is the reason I am a Sister of Charity Associate. But more than that, she is the reason I have been able to become a more authentic human being, a woman of greater integrity, a more courageous feminist, and a more joyful, laughter-filled activist. She fostered my cavernous hunger for justice, catalyzed my determination to help create a world infused with the Gospel, and most of all, assured me of my inner strength when I was in doubt.

One of the great joys of the last few days has been to see some of her writings and to reflect upon her rich, extraordinary life with her and so many others who care for her.

She has been a lover.
Her doctoral dissertation, *Patriarchal Power and the Pauperization of Women*, was just one labor of love along the way.

There were so many.


She founded and directed the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center in Cincinnati and the Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation [OPJIC].

She was at the United Nation's Fourth World Congress on Women's Rights in Beijing in 1995 and her interactions with high level politicians, writers, poets, theologians, movers, shakers, and activists were legend.

In 2009, Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk foolishly barred her from teaching in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati because she would not retract her support for women's ordination to the priesthood.

With the candor born of practiced integrity, Louise cut to the chase. “For four decades I have devoted my ministry to advocating on behalf of the marginalized through religious congregations, justice organizations, ecumenical and interfaith groups. Women’s ordination is a justice issue. Its basis is the value, dignity and equality of women. I believe this to my very core. To publicly state otherwise would be a lie and a violation of my conscience. I love, support and
cherish the part of Church that upholds the gospel mission and vision of Jesus.”

Quoting Martin Luther, she said, “Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.”

In August, Louise preached for our new initiative, Catholic Women Preach, and her words stay with me tonight as I tearfully listen to her labored breath.

"When we are at peace, hope emerges, when we are hopeful we become agents of change. Agents of change believe in and work for a better tomorrow. Our God is a God of yesterday and today. Our God is also a God of tomorrow, of the future. 'BE NOT AFRAID. I GO BEFORE YOU. BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.'"

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

Robert Mickens asks if Pope Francis has delivered a mortal blow to his pontificate

Robert Mickens writes that during his nearly five years in office Pope Francis has won the admiration of people across all confessional lines and those with no faith allegiance at all, becoming perhaps history's most universally beloved and respected Bishop of Rome, at least since St. John XXIII. Quite simply, he is today the most popular spiritual and even political leader on the world's stage.

Of course, traditionalist Catholics and people of a
conservative political bent don't see him that way. They have labeled him as a populist, a subversive and even a communist.

They believe Francis has abdicated his role of defending a crumbling Old World order for which the Roman Church has long stood as the last bulwark — firstly, in the aftermath of the Enlightenment and, more recently, amidst the socio-political upheaval of the 1960s that continues to erode the so-called Judeo-Christian moorings of contemporary society. But the evidence suggests that, up to now, the pope's supporters far outnumber his detractors. However, that may be about to change.

Pope Francis' decision to staunchly defend Chilean Bishop Juan Barros of Osorno against accusations that he tried to cover-up sexual abuse by the country's most notorious priest offender, Fernando Karadima, has bewildered and angered a good number of those who have been most approving of the pope. Read more

Pope Francis orders Archbishop Scicluna to investigate Barros

Nicole Winfield reports that after coming under excoriating public criticism, Pope Francis decided Tuesday to send the Vatican's most respected sex crimes expert to Chile to investigate a bishop accused by victims of covering up for the country's most notorious pedophile priest. The Vatican said Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna would travel to Chile "to listen
to those who have expressed the desire to provide elements" about the case of Bishop Juan Barros.

The move marks the first known time the Vatican has launched a full-blown investigation into allegations of sex abuse coverup, and it comes after Francis was harshly criticized by the media, survivors of abuse, his fellow Jesuits and some of his top advisers for his unwavering defence of Barros.

The Barros controversy dominated Francis' just-ended trip to Chile and Peru and exposed his blind spot about clerical abuse. Even the head of his abuse advisory panel, Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, publicly rebuked him for his dismissive treatment of victims and tried to set him straight. Read more

The Tablet story

FutureChurch's Women in Church Leadership volunteer, Robin Senior, is featured in report on Feminism and Faith in Union

In early January, an email appeared in Robin Senior's inbox inviting her to an event called "Feminism and Faith in Union."

"I didn't even open it," Senior, a parishioner at St. Dominic's in Oyster Bay, Long Island, said. "I pictured angry, strident, left-wing women. I just had this visceral reaction."

About a week later, a reminder email appeared in her inbox. It described the Feminism and Faith event as a "movement of women and men celebrating the power of feminist activism and sacrament."

"The word sacrament got me to open it," said Senior, who earned a
master in theology from the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington in 2006. She clicked on the event's website and noticed that it offered the Merriam-Webster definitions of feminism — the most looked up word in its online dictionary in 2017.

The definitions were, "the theory supporting the political, economic and social equality of the sexes," and "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests." Read more

Call To Action Nebraska and Bishop Conley negotiate lifting excommunications

The Lincoln Star reports that Catholics who belong to a group that was excommunicated from the Diocese of Lincoln more than two decades ago may soon be allowed to fully participate in services.

Then-Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz issued a blanket excommunication decree to all members of the group Call to Action in 1996, saying the group was "perilous" to the Catholic faith. The national group advocates for reform in the Catholic Church related to women's ordinations, LGBTQ rights and other issues. "I thought it was astounding because it's a type of action made by a bishop that is just not done," said Rachel Pokora, a member of Nebraska Call To Action since 1997. Pokora heard about the excommunication order on national TV while she was a graduate student in Indiana interviewing for full-time jobs in Lincoln.

But Bishop Conley, two diocesan officials and five women who
are Call to Action members have been talking in private since September 2016, discussing the possibility of lifting the excommunication and changes the women would like to see within the diocese.

"Mostly what's been happening is sharing our own Catholic journey: why we're Catholic and how we're Catholic," said Patty Hawk, who has practiced in a neighboring diocese since the excommunication. "We've talked a lot about that pain that surrounded the excommunication and just tried to understand each other better."

Read more
US News Report

Francis Sullivan offers message as he departs from council

The chief executive officer of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council has a blunt, final message to Australia’s Catholic leaders following completion of the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse: “There needs to be reform, renewal and refreshment in the Church”.

As the council’s chief executive officer since 2013, Francis Sullivan is compiling a final report to be handed to the Australian bishops by the end of March.

He is also preparing for the council to be disbanded after delivering the report, and for his own next career move. Throughout the Royal Commission, Mr Sullivan pinpointed “the shameful and confronting” culture of Church in the past, and maintained the need for cultural reform if the Church was to seriously tackle
His public statements were often met with polarised responses.

“It’s been five tough years,” the father-of-three told The Catholic Leader last week, as he also considered his own future.

“I said ‘I would do the job’.

“I literally have given my all, supported by my wife Susan.

“Child sex abuse is about the abuse of power and the Catholic Church unfortunately has a very bad history about the abuse of power – and not just in regard to the abuse of children.”

The TJHC’s final report will contain an analysis of Royal Commission recommendations, and how, during the past five years, the council has spearheaded the introduction of child sexual abuse handling, safeguarding, care and prevention programs.

Mr Sullivan said the report would recommend Catholic leaders set up a new implementation body to guide the future Church governance of the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

“I do think it should be run by lay people, and I do think it should be something the bishops and religious leaders are advised by rather than sitting on the implementation body themselves,” he said, making clear he is not personally interested in joining any new body.

Read more

**Francis to Order of Malta: Stop admitting members**

Christopher Lamb reports that Pope Francis has told an elite section of the Order of Malta to stop admitting new members until reforms have
been carried out, while declining a request from those knights to hand them greater control of the organisation.
The move comes just over a year after the Grand Master of the order, Fra’ Matthew Festing, resigned following a public stand-off with the Pope and an unprecedented intervention by the Vatican.

It resulted in the election last April of Fra’ Giacomo dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto who took over as interim leader with a brief to reform the 11th century organisation, a religious order that combines a vast global charitable enterprise with a byzantine governance structure. Knights from across the world are due to gather in Rome next week for a major summit on planned reforms.

Read more

Synod on Youth representatives being chosen

The U.S. bishops have selected the young adult delegates who will represent the country at the pre-synod gathering in Rome this March, which will take place before the 2018 Youth Synod of Bishops in October.

The three delegates, all 20-somethings, represent a variety of vocations and will be able to bring their personal perspectives, as well as what they have learned from working with young people at local and national levels, to the gathering in Rome, said a representative of the U.S. bishops’ conference. “What was not really intended, but certainly was wonderful to see, was that they really reflect the vocational diversity (of the Church),” said Paul Jarzembowski, assistant director for youth and young adult
ministries at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“This is a pre-synod meeting on the reality of young people but also the vocational pathways, so it was wonderful to see that the three representatives... represent the three particular phases and experiences of the vocational journey, it just made for a wonderful diversity of the vocational and ministerial experiences,” he told CNA.

*The chosen delegates are:* 
Brother Javier Hansen, FSC, a LaSallian Brother who teaches religion at Cathedral High School-El Paso, Texas; Nick López, a single young adult who is the director of campus ministry for the University of Dallas and a guest columnist for the Catholic News Service; and Katie Prejean McGrady, a wife, new mother, youth minister, and speaker from the Diocese of Lake Charles in Louisiana.

The pre-synod gathering is significant because it is yet another way that the Church is listening to and gathering information about youth and young people, ages 16-30, the demographic on which the synod will focus, Jarzembowski said. Typically, the bishops gather pre-synod data from questionnaires sent out to episcopal conferences, but this year the bishops are also including this pre-synod gathering as well as the pre-synod youth survey, which was available online last year.

“So when the bishops meet in Rome in October, they will have a lot of information at their fingertips in terms of what is the experience of young people today,” Jarzembowski said. The Youth Synod’s theme is
Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” While an official agenda has yet to be set, the preparatory document outlines some of the things that the bishops will be discussing, while the rest will be determined by the pre-synod survey as well as the gathering.

Brother Hansen said that he looks forward to representing young adult religious vocations, as well as his students, at the gathering.

Canada
The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) has named two Canadian young adults as its delegates to the upcoming meeting of youth, to be held at the Vatican 19-24 March 2018. The gathering is in preparation for the October 2018 Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment. The two delegates are Ms. Emilie Callan and Mr. Jacob Jason Genaille-Dustyhorn.

Ms. Callan is 29 years old, bilingual and grew up in a French-speaking family in Cornwall, Ontario. She has been on staff with the Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation for several years, and is a television producer and writer. She served as one of the two co-hosts of the recent National Youth Forum organized by Salt & Light TV on "Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment".

Mr. Genaille-Dustyhorn is Cree and 21 years old. He is currently a student in the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, and is also involved
The criteria for selecting names of young people for the presynodal meeting included being between 18 and 29 years of age and actively involved in the life of the Church.

**Rita Ferrone on liturgical translations**

Rita Ferrone writes that Francis wants people to talk to one another and she is not too concerned about the fact that we don’t yet know what all the changes to *Liturgiam authenticam* will be.

She suggests that this allows all of us time to think over what Francis has said, prayerfully and with an open mind. Bishops, priests, and people, should consider the issues and talk with one another about what it all might mean.

A wonderful beginning to this process has emerged in three important articles recently published in Rome. All three are written by eminent scholars and concern the motu proprio. One, on inculturation, appeared in the Jesuit magazine, *La Civiltà Cattolica*. It made a strong case for the motu proprio as a fresh starting point for the cultural adaptation of the liturgy. The other two were published on the web page of the Congregation for Divine Worship at the Vatican. They concern the relationship of the motu proprio to Vatican II. One is on the right of the people to intelligible worship and the church’s obligation to provide it — a right and obligation that arise from the nature of liturgy itself. The other explains
the motu proprio in terms of canon law and points out that Liturgiam authenticam has been the source of liturgical abuses, which can now be corrected. There is much to ponder and discuss in these articles.

The problem for us in the English-speaking world, however, is that our bishops seem to think there is nothing to discuss. They have the answers: Liturgiam authenticam remains in force; nothing has changed except the question of who enforces it (then, the Curia; now, the conferences of bishops); and absolute fidelity to the Latin text is what Francis’ motu proprio demands. Never mind the fact that Francis has explicitly said it is a “threefold fidelity” that is required: to the Latin text, to the receptor language, and to the understanding of the people. Bishop Brian Dunn, a Canadian member of the Episcopal Board of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), published a paper which asserted that Liturgiam authenticam corresponds quite well to Francis’ motu proprio. In his view, this instruction is perfectly suited to carrying out Francis’ wishes, and ICEL should continue to produce intelligible translations, as it has all along! It’s a point of view, certainly, but one which would make many people shake their heads. If we already produce such intelligible translations, why, after one or another of the current prayers of the Missal, are so many thinking “What did I just pray?”

If Liturgiam authenticam is perfectly suited to carrying forth Francis’ program, why did he
ignore it and instead quote extensively from an earlier document on translation (Comme le prévoit) which *Liturgiam authenticam*, with great fanfare, replaced?

Read more

**Rome says priests need better formation**

UCAnews reports that, according to Rome, Philippine Church leaders must pay attention to the continuing formation of members of the clergy and those studying for the priesthood.

Cardinal Beniamino Stella, prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome, said priests should "undertake, in a unique way, ongoing human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation."

In his message to a gathering of Filipino priests in Cebu City last week, the prelate said Filipino clergymen need to discover "wider horizons" in their evangelization work.

The four-day gathering was part of the Philippines' observance of the "Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons."

Cardinal Stella said priests will also benefit attending courses "on the practice of priestly formation" that are often held in Rome.

Read more

**Former Irish President Mary McAleese concerned that LGBT people will be marginalized at World Meeting of Families**

Former President of Ireland, Dr
Mary McAleese, has said she is concerned that next August’s World Meeting of Families event in Dublin will marginalise the LGBT community.

She raised her concerns after it emerged that the WMF office in Dublin had removed an image of a same-sex couple from a booklet on the family "Amoris: Let’s talk Family! Let’s be Family!" which is aimed at parishes.

Last week, a new edition of the booklet was issued by catholic publisher Veritas.

This new edition no longer contains an image of a same-sex couple on page 24. The following paragraph has also been deleted from its text: "While the Church upholds the ideal of marriage as a permanent commitment between a man and a woman, other unions exist which provide mutual support to the couple. Pope Francis encourages us never to exclude but to accompany these couples also, with love, care and support."

In all, six images which could be interpreted as a gay couple, have been replaced in the new edition of the booklet by images of families of a father, mother and children.

Read more

Francis wants to renew theology studies

Nicolas Senèze writes that in his new apostolic constitution, Veritatis Gaudium, published on Jan. 29, Pope Francis is aiming to develop a new way of looking at teaching the “ecclesiastical sciences.”
The apostolic constitution, which has been in preparation for several years, reorganizes the teaching of what the church calls the “ecclesiastical sciences,” principally theology, philosophy and canon law.

It replaces Pope John Paul II’s 1979 apostolic constitution, Sapientia Christiana, although it does not make major changes to it. Rather, it endeavors to incorporate developments that occurred under the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI with respect to the teaching of theology, particularly in the encyclical Fides and Ratio.

In particular, Veritatis Gaudium aims to give a new impetus to theological research.

Portuguese diocese adopts broader interpretation of 'Amoris Laetitia'

Portuguese Archbishop Jorge Ferreira da Costa Ortiga of Braga has published a new pastoral letter entitled “Building one’s home on rock” together with an orientation document dealing with family pastoral care.

In his letter, Archbishop Ferreira da Costa Ortiga, who also launched an “Archdiocesan Service for Family Support and Assistance” on Jan. 17 is proposing to implement several recommendations from the synod on the family taken up in Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia. These include an emphasis on marriage preparation for couples as well as ongoing
accompaniment after their weddings.

However, Archbishop Ferreira da Costa Ortiga’s proposals primarily focus on an issue that is still debated three years after the publication of the exhortation, namely access to the sacraments by divorced and remarried couples.

Here, he proposes a particularly broad interpretation of Amoris Laetitia, opening up the possibility for all people in this situation to obtain access to communion on the basis of a conscience-based decision. “We do not want pastoral care to be based only on tradition,” Archbishop Ferreira da Costa Ortiga said in a preamble to his letter, which was unanimously approved by the diocesan presbyteral council.

Read more

**In case you missed it: Fr. Tom Doyle defends SNAP**

Expert Fr. Tom Doyle responds to accusations made again Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests.

He writes that SNAP is in the crosshairs. As most know, a former employee has filed a lawsuit that makes several allegations and in general tries to portray SNAP as a deceptive, dishonest criminal enterprise. The plaintiff makes a number of serious accusations in her complaint, but they really are aimed at SNAP’s top national leaders and not the organization. She departed SNAP four years ago and now has decided to file a lawsuit. Her contention that SNAP was actually a cover for an elaborate system involving steering
victims to attorneys who in turn paid it kickbacks is ludicrous. Read more

Part II

More women are sharing their stories of being called to the diaconate. Share your story at our 100 Women Deacons campaign!

You won't want to miss these FutureChurch events!

Please support this work!

Be inspired! Catholic Women Preach!

Please support this effort!

Nearly 110,000 views in just over one year! PLEASE SUPPORT CATHOLIC WOMEN PREACH!

Please take the Catholic Women Preach survey and help us to make this exciting initiative even better!
Add your name to our 100 women deacons list!

Start a conversation with DeaconChat

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

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

Learn what you can do to save your parish community

New! International priests statistics!

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

Get the latest scholarship on the role of early Christian women by Christine Schenk, CSJ. Receive a copy of Crispina and Her Sisters when you donate $125 or more to FutureChurch!

Crispina and Her Sisters will open your eyes to the role women played in the shaping and expanding Christianity

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 was released mid-December. **FutureChurch is 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.