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Download your 2017 Feast of St. Mary of Magdala Resource -- Celebrating Women Preachers: Go and Tell My Sisters and Brothers!

FutureChurch, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, and Voice of the Faith launch new project to foster dialogue on women deacons - DeaconChat

In a press release, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, FutureChurch, and Voice of the Faithful announced the launching anew initiative to foster conversation on women deacons.

DeaconChat(catholicwomendeacons.org/support/deaconchat) brings Catholics - both lay and ordained - into dialogue.

On May 12, 2016, Pope Francis – responding to a question posed by members of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) – said that he would establish a commission to study the question of ordaining women...
deacons in the Roman Catholic Church. That commission was formally announced in August and began its work in November of 2016.

"As the commission undertakes its work, it is important that Catholics — lay and ordained — undergo their own study and discernment of the history and present possibility of ordaining women to the diaconate," said Fr. Bob Bonnot, Chair of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests. "DeaconChat provides that opportunity."

“This initiative is designed to foster educational efforts and enriching dialogue on women deacons," said Donna B. Doucette, Executive Director of Voice of the Faithful. "The program has three important components: learning, sharing, and connecting."

"The initiative includes important educational materials, a link to purchase Phyllis Zagano’s book Women Deacons: Past, Present and Future, and guides for inviting clergy to dialogue," said Deborah Rose-Milavec, Executive Director of FutureChurch. "We hope Catholics in the United States and around the world will be inspired to start a conversation in their parish."

The goal of DeaconChat is to bring ordained and lay Catholics together to learn and discern together.

The three organizations are asking you to engage a local member of the clergy (your parish priest, deacon, or your local bishop) in a conversation about women deacons.

Learn more and download the resources

Catholic groups launch conversation about female deacons

VATICAN CITY (RNS) Several
progressive Catholic groups are launching an initiative aimed at giving lay Catholics and clergy across the U.S. a direct say on whether the church should ordain women deacons.

Their actions follow the appointment of a panel of experts set up by Pope Francis to consider the controversial question.

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, FutureChurch and Voice of the Faithful have launched DeaconChat in a bid to promote education and dialogue on the topic.

Read more

The Synod Survey for Youth is finally out

To involve young people in preparations for the Synod of Bishops on youth in 2018, the Vatican has released an online questionnaire to better understand the lives, attitudes, and concerns of 16- to 29-year-olds around the world.

The questionnaire — available in English, Spanish, French, and Italian — can be found on the synod's official site: youth.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/it.html and is open to any young person, regardless of faith or religious belief. Click here to start the survey in English.

The general secretariat of the synod launched the website June 14 to share information about the October 2018 synod on "Young people, faith and vocational discernment" and to link to an online, anonymous survey asking young people about their lives and expectations.

Read more
In January 2017, the Synod of Bishops issued the Preparatory Document for Fifteenth Ordinary Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment which will take place in October 2018.

This synod document stands out for its humbler, thoughtful tone. It is shot through with compassion and it is easy to recognize Francis’s desire to reach out to younger Catholics as they are.

Some highlights include:

1. **A focus on the role of conscience in the lives of young Catholics.**

   The place for this dialogue is the conscience. As taught by the Second Vatican Council, conscience “is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths” (Gaudium et spes, 16). Conscience is therefore an inviolable place where a promising invitation is present. To discern the voice of the Spirit from other calls and decide how to respond is the task of each person. Others may accompany and affirm a person, but they can never take another person’s place in this regard (2:1)

2. **Encouragement to young people to discern in the context of the "signs of the times."**

   Making decisions and guiding one’s actions in situations of uncertainty and in the face of conflicting inner forces is the place for exercising discernment, a classic term in the tradition of the Church which applies to a variety of situations. Indeed, one form of discernment is exercised in reading the signs of the times which leads to recognizing the presence and action of the Spirit in history. (2:2)

3. **The importance of**
accompaniment in trust and without judgement rather than being tempted to "take control of their faith." (2.4)

Accompanying young people requires going beyond a preconceived framework, encountering young people where they are, adapting to their times and pace of life and taking them seriously. (3.1)

4. Abandoning rigid attitudes and giving up practices that make the Church outdated.

Pastoral vocational care, in this sense, means to accept the invitation of Pope Francis: “going out”, primarily, by abandoning the rigid attitudes which make the proclamation of the joy of the Gospel less credible; “going out”, leaving behind a framework which makes people feel hemmed-in; and “going out”, by giving up a way of acting as Church which at times is outdated. (3.1)

5. Recognizing that the Church can learn from young people.

...Each community is called to be attentive to young people, especially those who are experiencing poverty, marginalization or exclusion and lead them to become involved in life. Being close to young people, who are living amidst great poverty and hardship, violence, war, disease, disability and suffering, is a special gift of the Spirit, which can truly manifest a proper manner of acting by a Church which is “going out”. The Church herself is called to learn from young people. (3.2)

6. Looking for younger Catholics outside of traditional places, accepting them just as they are, and listening deeply to them.

As opposed to situations in the past, the Church needs to get accustomed to the fact that the ways of approaching the faith are less standardized, and therefore she must
become more attentive to the individuality of each person. Together with those who continue to follow the traditional stages of Christian initiation, many come to encounter the Lord and the community of believers in other ways and later in life, for example, coming from a commitment to justice, or from contacts outside the Church with someone who is a credible witness. The challenge for communities is to receive everyone, following the example of Jesus who could speak with Jews and Samaritans and with pagans in Greek culture and Roman occupiers, seizing upon the deep desires of each one of them. (3.4)

There is a list of more than 15 questions for young people to answer in the survey (see article above), but two stand out in terms of opening doors to new understanding.

1. In what manner does the Church listen to the lived situations of young people?

5. What do young people really ask of the Church in your country / countries today?

Read the document

**Luke Hansen, S.J. (who served as a FutureChurch intern in 2015), preaches about women deacons in his first homily as an ordained priest**

In his first homily as a newly ordained priest, Luke Hansen spoke prophetically.

*In the many areas of church life, where are we free—or fearful? In what places do we need greater freedom to be effective ministers of the Gospel?*

In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul
says, “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for some benefit.” We must take this seriously. In order to fulfill its mission, the church needs the unique gifts the Spirit has given each person. No one is excluded: man or woman or child; black, brown or white; gay or straight or bi or transgender; clergy or lay; C.E.O. or service worker; Republican or Democrat or neither. What matters is that you are baptized priest, prophet and king. And the church and the world need your unique gifts.

Read Luke’s homily in full

Cardinal Gracias says Pope Francis considering mandating lay consultation in bishop selections

One of the members of the Council of Cardinals said the group is considering whether to advise Pope Francis to make it mandatory for Vatican ambassadors to consult with laypeople before making recommendations for possible new bishops in the Catholic Church.

Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias suggested the nine-member group might recommend that ambassadors be instructed to consult with members of a diocese’s pastoral or finance councils before passing on names of who to consider for bishop.

"This is a central matter for the church," Gracias said in a June 15 NCR interview. "The bishop is a central figure and the choice of a good bishop is very important for every church. If you choose the wrong person, things can be set back by years in the pastoral life of the church."

Read more
off with a speech from the Apostolic Nuncio urging them to be a listening church

At their summer conference, the USCCB addressed issues of immigration and refugees, religious freedom at home and abroad as well as health care policy developments.

At the beginning of the meeting the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre addressed the USSCB reflecting on Aparecida, *Evangelii Gaudium* while stating that the Church needs to listen.

Read the Nuncio's speech.

**Honoree Margaret Farley states, "We haven't gone far enough".**

Praised for offering mercy and hope to many in her 35 years of teaching, writing and service, ethicist Mercy Sr. Margaret Farley was honored by women theologians June 8 at the *Catholic Theological Society of America* convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Accepting the Ann O'Hara Graff award, Farley cited O'Hara Graff's commitment to both ideas and action —"theology and acts of mercy"— in calling for continuing work to address women's inequality in the church and in society.

"We have not gone far enough," said Farley, professor emerita of Christian ethics at Yale University Divinity School and a Sister of Mercy. "We still hear the cries of women, through the centuries and today."

Read more

**Council of Cardinals want to decentralize authority on**
deacons

The group of cardinals advising Pope Francis on reforming the Vatican bureaucracy has considered specific ways to decentralize authority in the Catholic church, proposing in particular that more responsibility for permanent deacons could move from Rome to local bishops' conferences.

The nine member Council of Cardinals spoke in their June 12-14 meeting about "transferring some faculties from the Roman Curia to local bishops or bishops' conferences," Vatican spokesman Greg Burke said in a short briefing June 14.

Read more

Southern Baptists go inclusive

Southern Baptists have long defended literal approaches to the Bible, but their recent translation of the Good Book might have them switching sides.

Last fall, the publishing arm of the 15-million member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) released the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). LifeWay Christian Stores, America’s largest Christian retailer, which is owned by the SBC, sells the translation at hundreds of its locations nationwide and touts it as a work of superior scholarship. But patrons are largely unaware that the denomination-approved translation is gender-inclusive.

Read more

Progress in clampdown on money laundering

The Holy See's financial watchdog has stepped up effort to clamp down on money laundering with a thirty percent
increase in the number of reports it has submitted to the Vatican prosecutor's office according to Christopher Lamb of *The Tablet*.

It is also reported that the number of suspicious transactions taking place inside the Vatican has decreased by around sixty percent, thanks to a tough new system of vigilance that has come into effect in recent years.

Rene Brulhart, President of the Vatican's Financial Information Authority was asked why no one has been convicted of any crimes given the rise in the number of reports.

Brulhart responded that it was a fair question and that gathering the evidence from foreign states took time. He explained that the Vatican was "building a functional and sustainable system" of financial oversight and that the Holy See was co-operating internationally to clamp down on illicit activities.

(20 May 2017, *The Tablet*)

**Women like Marie Collins and Sheila Hollins model a different way of working**

Joanna Moorhead of *The Tablet* argues that Pope Francis' acknowledgement of Marie Collins' complaints about the Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith and his siding with her is a sign that women are making a greater impact at the highest levels of governance.

She writes that women like Marie Collins and Sheila Hollins model a different way of working.

It's not often that a Pope sides with a woman who’s at loggerheads with the Vatican. But when Francis was passed the mike at 30,000 feet in one of his regular in-flight press conferences last weekend on his way home from...
Portugal, that’s what happened.

The Pope was responding to a question about an Irishwoman called Marie Collins who, you may recall, served on the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors until a few weeks ago, when she resigned over what she perceived as shortcomings in its dealings with individuals like her who had been victims of abuse. Asked on the plane how he felt about her decision to go, the Pope said, candidly, that Collins “was right about some things.”

Read more (subscription link)

**Pope Francis urges that women have a growing presence in social, political, and economic life - as well as in the life of the Church - at national and international level**

Pope Francis met with participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, who have been discussing the key contribution of women to interfaith relations.

He noted how often women’s work and dignity is threatened by violence and hatred which tears families and societies apart.

Faced with the challenges of our globalized world, he said, there is a vital need to recognize the abilities of women to teach values of unity and fraternity which can transform the human family.

It is therefore to the benefit of society that women have a growing presence in social, political and economic life - as well as in the life of the Church - at national and international level, the Pope said. Women’s rights, he insisted, must be affirmed and protected, including, if necessary, through legal means.
Congregation of St. Joseph featured in Sisterhood!

The Congregation of St. Joseph is being featured in the first of a series of seven videos, SISTERHOOD, produced by Salt+Light TV. Livestreaming at 8pm (EDT) beginning June 4th, the schedule is as follows:

June 4  Congregation of St. Joseph
June 11  Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Uganda/Kenya Province
June 18  Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
June 25  Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro
July 2  Sisters of the Holy Family
July 9  Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Benin City, Nigeria
July 16  Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Chí Hòa

Pulse Anniversary: An opportunity to acknowledge the role the Church plays in demeaning LGBT people

When Omar Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 48 others inside a prominent gay night club in Orlando, Florida, a year ago this week, the city’s Catholic bishop, John G. Noonan, denounced what he called a "massive assault on the dignity of human life." The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops lamented the "unspeakable violence." The Vatican’s press office released a statement decrying "such terrible and absurd violence." Among these sincere expressions of grief, not one recognized the fact that this assault on human dignity and this horrific crime had targeted gay people specifically.

Even as nearly every bishop in the
country missed an obvious opportunity to express solidarity with LGBT people in the wake of the Pulse nightclub shooting, those in the church hierarchy who did respond clearly — including Chicago’s Cardinal Blase Cupich — offer cautious hope that the nation's most influential church can chart a better path forward when it comes to affirming the human rights of LGBT people.

The first step in what will be a slow healing process is for Catholic leaders to acknowledge the church plays a role in wounding LGBT people by using dehumanizing language.

Read more

We need a Synod on the Priesthood

The Vatican is preparing for the Synod of Bishops on Youth, Faith, and Vocational Discernment.

Unusually, the lineamenta — as the preparatory discussion documents are called — are now available online so that anyone can comment.

This is a significant step forward as the comments received are now not limited to the laborious process of filtering and redacting through the local diocese and the bishops’ conferences. One hopes that the synod office receiving the submissions of the electronic interaction with the youth — for this is how young people prefer to work — will recognise the value of this process.

The challenge of listening should be extended to listening now to the calls for the topic for the synod after that. I think that the Holy Father, who has proved himself a capable listener, should hear the crisis of vision of the ministerial priesthood.

His recent comments on the possibility of ordaining as priests viri probati —
proven married men who would administer the sacraments in areas where these are difficult to obtain—is a huge step forward to recognising a discussion that has been taking place for the last 20 years.

To a great extent, that discussion has been led by our own Bishop Fritz Lobinger, retired of Aliwal North. At the centre of it is the fact that the Church cannot exist without the Eucharist.

The current situation of burnout, exhaustion and a lack of vision among priests has forced many of us into a maintenance situation. There are not enough of us on the ground. The demands are unrelenting and some, if not many, priests are just not up to the task. Often we have no idea what the task really is.

Read more

Laos cardinal-elect forms a different kind of priest

Rita Ferrone contends that Pope Francis's latest appointments to the College of Cardinals should be judged by their character and their Gospel-centered work - which is outstanding.

She writes that these appointments are significant and interesting, but not so much because these cardinals-elect are “outsiders” to the traditional ecclesiastical power centers. What is interesting about them is their character.

Take, for instance, cardinal-elect Louis-Marie Ling Mangkhanekhoun of Laos. Talk about “peripheries” - he doesn't even have a diocese. He is the apostolic vicar of Paske, a territory that includes a million inhabitants and only 14,500 Catholics. His mission is focused on evangelizing animists living in the mountains.

As of 2015, when he gave an interview to Asia News, he had a total of six priests in his charge. Six! Yet he
cheerfully shepherds along what he calls his “baby diocese”.

The positive thing is that we have married catechists who are true missionaries, who go to live in the villages and become the "roots" of evangelization. They go, live, they begin to build bonds.... We offer this experience to the seminarians.

Seminary students must study three years, then they must stop for at least a year, up to three years to mature in their decision, but also for pastoral experience as catechists, carrying medicines, aid, prayers for the people of the mountain. They integrate with the villagers, live as the villagers do in everything.

Pardon me while I pick myself up from the floor. The married catechists put down the roots of evangelization? The seminarians follow them to gain pastoral experience as catechists? They do all this before they are ordained, during a gap year (or three)? They live as the villagers do?

This sounds nothing like the hothouse environment seminaries typically strive to create in North America. Our bishops fear the corrupting influence of “non-priests” so much that their tender recruits are sequestered, not even allowed to share a classroom with lay catechists, much less learn from them or strive to integrate themselves with the people they will serve.

Read more (subscription link)

New Cardinal from Laos is Known for Kindness

Some priests in India pushing back against Pope Francis' reforms

Jesuit priest, Myron J. Pereira of Mumbai writes about the growing number of priests who are openly
opposing Pope Francis.

He writes that Catholic priests in India are not known for speaking out in public. By and large they are a subdued lot, given more to surreptitious politicking than to candor and outspokenness.

So, it was a matter of great astonishment for Indian Catholics to hear the reports of a candid attack on the pope in mid-April. Speaking to his congregation in Montesilvano, Italy, Father Pushparaj openly criticized Pope Francis, an action which led to boos from his parishioners. Consequently, he was transferred by his bishop.

Is this open act of papal criticism unusual? It certainly is.

Read more

Fewer "lab theologians" according to Mickens

There are the “lab theologians” whose ideologies guide such churchman like Cardinal Rouco Varela. These are the ones who believe that Catholics have a monopoly on truth. For them ecumenism is boiled down to “you-come-in-ism”, a lock-stock-and-barrel return to Rome.

The bad news is that this school of thought has had enormous influence on too many men in the Catholic hierarchy the past few decades, including some key leaders in Rome. The good news is that their numbers are waning.

Read more (subscription link)

Sixty nine priests resign in one diocese in Indonesia in protest against bishop's corruption

Dozens of Indonesian priests have quit
their posts en masse after accusing a bishop on the Catholic majority island of Flores of embezzling more than US$100,000 of church funds for personal use.

At least 69 priests from Ruteng Diocese submitted letters of resignation this week quitting their posts as episcopal vicars and parish priests, and demanded that Bishop Hubertus Leteng heed their calls for a complete overhaul of how the diocese is run.

Read more

**Whom shall I send? The Next Generation of Leaders**

Raymond Perrier of South Africa writes about the legacy of Bishop Barry Wood, Archbishop Denis Hurley and religious and lay leaders who have stood strong in building a church for the poor and discarded.

He asks what the legacy of the next generation will be?

Read more

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**Don't miss these opportunities and events!**

**Celebrate the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala!**

**Go and Tell My Sisters and Brothers: Celebrating Women Preachers**

Join thousands of Catholics across the
U.S. and worldwide as we celebrate the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala.

This year, FutureChurch will lift up women preachers from Scripture and history – from Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Magdala to Catherine of Siena and Thea Bowman. Together we will honor and learn from their witnesses and ask them to pray with us as we work to lift up women’s voices in Church and society today.

Download 2017 resource

FUTURECHURCH FALL EVENT

SAVE THE DATE!
October 27, 2017

Sr. Sandra Schneiders presents:

John’s Gospel: Blueprint for the Future of Parish Life

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

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.
FutureChurch resources

Want to learn about modern women witnesses of mercy? Or the history of early Christian women leaders? Want to know more about the priest shortage and what you can do to open the doors to married priests, women deacons, and lay leadership? Want to purchase our cards featuring St. Mary Magdalene, Apostle to the Apostles? Visit our store to view all our exciting resources.

Visit the FutureChurch store

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 Deacons

Are you called or are you discerning a call to the permanent diaconate? Share your story.

As Pope Francis’ commission on women deacons continues their work, women around the world are already discerning their own call to be a deacon. Share your story today and help make Catholic Women Deacons a reality!

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 and faith of women. Be inspired by the Catholic women who preach each Sunday and some holy days.

Learn more

Join us as we launch our new initiative - Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life

2017 - 2018 SERIES

September 13, 2017
Association of US Catholic Priests
*Priestless Parishes*

October 23, 2017
Professor Ed Hahnenberg
*Emerging Models for Ministry*

October 27, 2017
Sr. Sandra Schneiders
*John’s Gospel: Blueprint for the Future of Parish Life*

November 8, 2017
Fr. Robert D. Duch
*The Lobinger Model for Parish Leadership and Ministry*

January 17, 2018
Jamie Manson
*Religious Life for the Next Generation*

February 7, 2018
Chris Lowney
*Everyone Leads: How to Revitalize the Catholic Church*

Save the dates!

Learn what you can do to save your parish community

FutureChurch supports parishioners who want to preserve their parish...
community from being merged or closed. In doing so we have, together, changed Vatican policy. This FutureChurch initiative is designed to provide Catholics with tools to defend their parish homes has contributed to a highly significant change in Vatican policy. Since 2007, our Save Our Parish Community project has guided successful parishioner appeals across the U.S., and in Cleveland, Ohio.

Learn more

**Make your voice heard to open the door for married priests**

On a trip home from Tel Aviv, Pope Francis stated, "Celibacy is not a dogma of faith, it is a rule of life that I appreciate a great deal and I believe it is a gift for the Church. The door is always open given that it is not a dogma of faith." Bishop Erwin Krautler and Pope Francis discussed the priest shortage and future of the priesthood in Brazil urging the Bishop and all local bishops to be "courageous" and to make concrete suggestions on the possibilities available to assist in this crisis, including expanding the priesthood to include married men.

Catholics in the United States call on our bishops to follow Pope Francis' call to be courageous in seeking solutions to our growing priest shortage and to present these solutions to Rome.

As you know well, over the past forty years, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States and worldwide has experienced a steadily worsening priest shortage. At first, the process was so gradual that it was hardly noticed. But now, the rapidity of the decline is having a devastating impact on parish and sacramental life.

According to a 2008 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate study, half of the 19,302 active diocesan priests
Following Pope Francis' model we urge the U.S. Bishops to undertake a fresh examination of our early church tradition of a married and celibate priesthood, a diaconate served by women and men, and invite priests who have married back to ministry. Please encourage local bishops to open this important dialogue at a diocesan level particularly in the areas most affected by the priest shortage.

We also ask U.S. Bishops to open a discussion of these issues at their general assemblies with a view to presenting concrete suggestions for opening ordination to Pope Francis.

We call on you, our bishops and brothers in Christ, to encourage discussion of the genuine reform so necessary to the future of the Church. We urge you to take action now.

Learn more