Please support FutureChurch during our Pentecost Campaign!

DeaconChat resources help Catholics to foster dialogue on women deacons

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. Many Catholics want to learn more about the history and theology of women deacons and to carry out fruitful dialogue with others in the Church. Our goal is to bring the ordained and the laity together in conversation to continue to learn and discern together.

We are asking you to engage a local...
Learn more and download the resources

**Women Deacons: An Interview with Phyllis Zagano**

Spoiler alert. You won't learn much about the direction of Pope Francis' commission on women deacons because Phyllis Zagano is mum on that word, but this interview is informative featuring Phyllis conversing with Sebastian Gomes of Salt and Light Media with a cameo from Fr. Luke Hansen. Tune in!

**See video**

**I, Louise Akers**

I, Louise Akers, am an educated white woman, a Sister of Charity, a World Citizen who lives an economically comfortable life in a world where at least two-thirds of the people are destitute. I live in an institutional Roman Catholic Church that is ruled by an exclusive male hierarchy that seems to have no limits in how they exercise their power and their belief system. Evidence of this can be seen by the many persons who have been punished and, in the extreme, been excommunicated for raising questions regarding the ‘status quo’ of tradition and doctrine.

I am among these people.

**Read more**

**The crisis for priesthood deepens in England and Wales**

The number of women entering religious life has shown a slight increase in 2016, while the number of men
entering the priestly formation has dropped, according to figures released by the National Office for Vocation in England and Wales.

Last year, there were 25 new entrants to the priesthood, down from 42 in 2015. However, the total number of men entering religious life rose slightly from 25 in 2015 to 29 in 2016. The number of women entering religious life increased from 29 in 2015 to 31 in 2016.

Sr Elaine Penrice, Religious Life Promoter at the National Office for Vocation said the approach of favouring spiritual discernment over a hard recruitment drive is more appealing to women thinking of entering religious life. “Recruitment puts people off and makes them afraid. Our society likes to feel free. It is not evangelical to think in terms of getting the numbers of the congregation up, instead we encourage people to see where the will of God leads them,” she explained.

Read more (subscription link)

Women as a clear and present danger to churchmen

This is a story that should have been told a year ago. I'm not sure why I have hesitated to tell it. But the strange alchemy of the fear and suspicion generated by recent terror attacks, combined with Pope Francis' recent comments about the "vocations crisis," compels me to recount an incident* that I was involved in one year ago this week: the day that a small group of women and I become a clear and present danger at the Vatican.

Read more

The uncertain future of parish life

T. Howland Sanks, S.J., summarizes the
challenges we face in keeping our Catholic parishes open and vibrant.

In his latest article, he cites researcher Katarina Schuth who writes, “The capability of the church in the United States to meet the spiritual needs of the growing and changing Catholic population depends on the qualities and numbers of men and women preparing for ministry.” For the past 20 years there have been barely 500 ordinations a year; meanwhile the Catholic population has grown from 47 million to 71 million since 1967. This mismatch is one of the factors in the reconfiguration of parishes and will only increase as the older clergy die or retire.

There has also been increasing emphasis on priestly identity and ministry, with seminarians taking courses separately from lay students (which is more true in diocesan seminaries than in schools of theology operated by religious orders). Furthermore, it seems that most bishops chose seminaries where this is so. Keeping seminarians separate from lay students is hardly helping to prepare them for collaborative leadership when they are ordained. There is a generational divide between the older priests who exemplify the “servant leader” model and younger ones representing the “cultic model” who see themselves as set apart from their lay colleagues.

Read more

Bill Timmeaus questions the use of "Father" when addressing priests

A persistent criticism of the Christian church universal — but especially the Catholic Church — is that in many ways it’s patriarchal. Which is to say that men, not women, run it.

Look at any picture of the College of
Cardinals gathered with the pope, and male dominance is embarrassingly obvious, given that it's at least theoretically possible to have female cardinals.

A subtle but effective reinforcement of this men's club image happens every time a Catholic priest is addressed as "Father." Oh, I know calling priests that has a long tradition and in some ways it's a charming personalization of the oversight role priests play. But as we celebrate Father's Day this month, maybe it's time for Catholics to reconsider the practice.

Read more

Mending the gap with the Anglican church will mean acceptance of all Anglican priests, including women priests

The Tablet's Christopher Lamb writes that for decades one of the major stumbling blocks to church unity has been the five words uttered in 1896 by Pope Leo XIII, when in the papal bull Apostolicae Curae he concluded that Anglican ordinations were "absolutely null and utterly void". This phrase is an open wound for those seeking to heal the divisions between Catholics and Anglicans, a theological ravine so far impossible to bridge.

Not anymore. An historic revision could be on the cards, with Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, one of the Church's top legal minds and an ally of Pope Francis, now suggesting that Leo XIII's declaration was overly rigid. "When someone is ordained in the Anglican Church and becomes a parish priest in a community, we cannot say that nothing has happened, that everything is 'invalid'," he says in a recently publish book.

Read more (subscription link)

No one is monitoring formerly
Nicole Sotelo warns that abusive former priests are not being monitored.

She writes that the parents of boys who accused a priest of sexual abuse wrote to the Chicago Archdiocese more than two decades ago: "Your repeatedly asking 'what do we want'? is one more insult. 'What we want' should be totally obvious. We want something done about these priest's." [sic]

Next week, June 15, marks the 25th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Chicago's announcement of the intent to create a review board to remove priests, such as the one mentioned by the parents. While publicly available files clearly document that church officials knew about the priest's behavior since at least the late 1980s, they did not report him to the authorities or remove him from ministry.

It was not until 2005 that the priest resigned from being a pastor and moved to a "monitored" setting. Two years afterwards, the priest had a young relative stay in his bedroom overnight while the priest's monitor was out of the country. After this incident occurred, the archdiocese began the process of laicization, or removing him from the priesthood.

Many abusive priests, like the one above, have voluntarily left or been removed from the priesthood, which begs the question, who is monitoring them now? The answer: nobody.

Read more

James Martin SJ leads on LGBT inclusion

James Martin, S.J. argues the church must move from a position of tolerance to inclusion when it comes to LGBT people. He criticizes the language of
disorder from the catechism, calls on Catholics to stop firing LGBT people from church positions and frequently uses terms like “gay” and “lesbian” that many Catholic officials avoid.

His book, "Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter Into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity" carries with it a sense of authority. It was approved by Martin’s Jesuit superiors and is endorsed by two Catholic cardinals and a bishop. And Martin was recently appointed by Francis as consultant to the Vatican’s Secretariat for Communication, which manages Vatican TV and radio as well as the pope’s social media presence.

Read more

German feminist blogs about a priest and improves their image

The year of “Valerie and the priest” has just reached its conclusion. After twelve months spent alongside Father Franziskus von Boeselager, Valerie Schönian posted her final blog article on 19 May (valerieundderpriester.de).

The 26-year-old journalist thoughtfully reflects on the year she spent “trying to understand Franziskus and to see the world through his eyes”.

Valerie is from Berlin, is a feminist, and has no links with the Catholic Church. She accompanied the priest in his day-to-day routine, attended Mass and burials, and traveled with him to Rome and Poland for International Youth Day gatherings.

Read more

Will Pope Francis replace Cardinal Mueller at the CDF?

John Allen suggests that Pope Francis
at some point over the summer may replace German Cardinal Gerhard Müller as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Granted, Müller is only 69, so there’s no immediate reason why a successor has to be named. However, he was first appointed to his position by Benedict XVI in 2012, so by normal Vatican standards the usual five-year term as head of a department will be up, and anyone with eyes can see that Francis and Müller aren’t exactly in sync on some issues, including the implications of the pope’s document Amoris Laetitia for the contentious issue of Communion for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.

Read more

Can this parish be saved?

Parishioners at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Montclair, New Jersey, say they were shocked last year when Newark Archbishop John Myers decreed that their parish should close and merge with one located a mile away. The parish was running a surplus, they said, and it consistently exceeded the fundraising goals given for the annual archdiocesan appeal. Its history dated to 1907, when Italian immigrants who felt unwanted at the nearby church started their own.

“It surprised all of us,” said Frank Cardell, who was the parish’s business manager and is now leader of the Committee to Save Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. There was no warning, he said, and pleas to Myers met with “deaf ears.”

Dozens of other congregations have mounted similar “save our parish” campaigns and, according to Sister Kate Kuenstler, an independent canon lawyer who has assisted hundreds of congregations in forty-eight dioceses over the past twelve years, it’s quite
common for bishops to shut parishes that are financially solvent. Often, she says, their land is eventually sold, allowing a neighboring parish that receives the new congregation to pay off debts owed to the diocese.

**Read more**

**Are children welcomed into our parishes?**

Children are vital to sustaining parish life. Seventy-two percent of our reader sample told *America* that, for good or ill, the way their children were welcomed had a critical effect on their own relationship with their parish.

Fifty-eight percent of our readers told us that their experience of bringing children into their faith community was positive. Among these readers, 24 percent described how people had played with, engaged or included their children.

The remaining 42 percent of readers were largely reluctant to characterize their children’s introduction to their parish as devoid of positive qualities, but many told us that negative interactions made bringing their children to Mass very stressful.

**Read more**

**Number of Catholics seeking annulments is growing**

Dan Morris-Young of the National Catholic Reporter finds that after nearly 30 years of watching a decline in the number of Catholics applying for marriage annulment, diocesan officials are reporting increases following Pope Francis' 2015 reform of church law on nullity procedures. Regardless of whether the apparent turnaround is a short-term phenomenon spurred by the canonical changes or not, some marriage tribunal staff and canon lawyers say the revised process is cultivating a "real change of culture."
While more precise numbers will not be known until required reports to the Vatican can be tallied later this year, several dioceses responding to NCR inquiries reported growth — some remarkable — in annulment case filings for 2016 compared to 2015.

Read more

Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio's commentary on 'irregular unions' should be required reading for all pastors

Michael Sean Winters suggests that a new text written by Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, a close friend of Pope Francis, strikes a ennobling balance on Catholic teaching and pastoral ministry and should be required reading for pastors.

Read more

Vatican II's 'Copernican revolution' calls for listening to the laity when building churches

The ecumenical monastic community in Bose, Italy, is hosting "Inhabit, Celebrate, Transform," a three-day conference on liturgy and architecture. L'Osservatore Romano has published an advance copy of a lecture by Father Dario Vitali, an Italian diocesan priest who serves as professor of ecclesiology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Father Vitali believes that a "Copernican revolution" in theology took place at the Second Vatican Council—a revolution in which being has priority over doing, the people of God precedes the hierarchy, and the sensus fidei[sense of faith] of the entire people of God is affirmed.
Korean forum promotes greater roles for laity

A Catholic forum has called for Korean laypeople to increase their role and status in the church.

The Social Apostleship Research Institute under the Catholic Lay Apostolate of Korea (CLAK) held its quarterly forum on May 25 in Myeongdong, Seoul.

Father John Chung Hee-wan made a speech and Paul Kwon Kil-joong, CLAK chairperson, and executive members of the lay council joined the discussion. During the forum, they exchanged views on the role of the council that will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

"Apostleship should not be monopolized by priests. Laypeople should fulfill their mission to proclaim the Gospel endowed by the church," Father Chung said.

Don't miss these opportunities and events!

FUTURECHURCH FALL EVENT

SAVE THE DATE!
October 27, 2017

Sr. Sandra Schneiders presents:
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

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.
Celebrate the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene!

Go and Tell My Sisters and Brothers: A Celebration of Women Preachers

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

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.

Learn more

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

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

Learn more

Catholic Women 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 plan to retire by 2019.

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