Please support our Women in Church Leadership Initiative!

Join the 100 Women Deacons Campaign!

Calling out the hatred and extremism of Church Militant

Michael Sean Winters adds further context to a video produced by The Atlantic about the vitriol, divisiveness, and hatred that spews from every pore of Church Militant's organization. In short, he exposes this group and their leadership for what they are – Catholicism's own extremists.

He writes, "... Church Militant regularly attacks other icons of our faith, especially those who are living and breathing. They are not fans of Pope Francis; instead they try to undermine his authority ... They attack Cardinal Blase Cupich for a statement he made calling for a consistent ethic of solidarity, hurling nastiness at Cupich's predecessor Cardinal Joseph Bernardin for good measure. They attack priests like Basilian Fr. Tom Rosica and Jesuit Fr. Jim Martin, men whose work with the media is truthful, balanced and evangelical. They attack Catholic Relief Services, which daily helps the poorest of the poor discover lives that accord with human dignity.

Attack, attack, attack. They invert Lincoln's call: 'With malice toward none,
Pope Francis speaks with Marie Collins; supports her stand

Pope Francis has finally spoken with Marie Collins and acknowledged her frustration, according to Joshua McElwee of the National Catholic Reporter.

... the pope was asked about Collins' resignation from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Collins, an Irishwoman, left the group in March due to frustration with Vatican officials' reluctance to cooperate with its work to protect children.

Francis said he has spoken to Collins and she was "right" in the frustration she expressed at the time of her resignation.

"Marie Collins has explained things to me very well," said the pontiff. "She is a capable woman who wants to work."

"She is a bit right," the pope continued. "There are many cases in which we are behind."

But Francis also praised steps the global church has taken in recent years to protect children. He cited the fact that most dioceses around the world now have policies in place about how to treat priests accused of abuse, calling that "great progress."

The pontiff suggested that the Vatican could decentralize some of its authority to judge priests accused priests by creating regional or continental tribunals, saying implementing such an idea is "in the planning stages."

Francis also said he respects all decisions made by Vatican tribunals about accused priests and has never...
issued a pardon for a priest found guilty, known in Italian as issuing a letter of grazia.

"I have never signed a grazia," the pontiff said bluntly.

In an exclusive statement for NCR explaining her decision to resign March 1, Collins said she was leaving the pontifical commission after Vatican officials failed to implement a series of its recommendations.

The abuse survivor expressed particular frustration about Vatican officials' reluctance to cooperate in helping create a sample template of guidelines for safeguarding children and to send acknowledgment letters to victims who contact the city-state.

"We are going ahead," Francis said Saturday. "Marie Collins was right about some things. But we also are moving forward."

Read more

Fr. Helmut Schueller and the Austrian Priests' Initiative challenge bishops to ordain married men, women deacons and to have the courage to lead Francis era reforms

An internationally renown group of reform-minded priests in Austria has criticized the world’s bishops for not capitalizing on Pope Francis' openness to make significant changes in Church ministry and pastoral practice.

The Austrian Priests’ Initiative (API) is urging the bishops to take up the leeway the pope has given them to look at such issues as the possibility of ordaining married men of proven virtue (viri probati) to the priesthood, women to the diaconate and allowing remarried divorcees to receive the Eucharist in certain cases.
Now is the time for married priests

Fr. Thomas Reese argues that the Church needs to ordain married priests now. Citing statistics from Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), he notes that vocations are declining in many parts of the world and even in places where vocations were more plentiful, expanded access to a middle class existence offers people more choices in education and vocations. Thus entering the priesthood does not offer the sole of access to education or the prestige it once did.

Reese suggests that if the People of God want married priests, they need to let their bishops know.

Catholics have been engaging their bishops for years through FutureChurch petitions and open letters. Please download a letter to customize and send to your bishop urging them to move forward on married priests.

To download an organizing kit go to futurechurch.org.

Parishes that are welcoming and inclusive are the parishes of the future

In the next year, FutureChurch will be launching a new initiative, "Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life" exploring the many ways in which the People of God are developing innovative models for carrying on parish and community life.

One thing is clear. The future of parish life is dependent on its open and welcoming spirit according to Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century by
In the 1980s, just twenty years after the Second Vatican Council, Notre Dame published a seminal study of parish life. At that time there were:

1. Increases in lay leadership and decision making in parishes.
2. A dramatic decrease in weekly Mass attendance with clear generational differences.
3. A decline in parochial schools with an increase in religious ed being taught by lay parishioners.
4. Migration of Catholics from urban centers to the suburbs and from the Northeast and Upper Midwest to the Southwest and West.

But much has changed over the past 30 years. Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century expands and updates the Notre Dame study, noting five important trends that are having a significant impact on parish life: a) declining vocations to ordained and non-ordained religious life, b) Catholic migration from the inner city to the suburbs and the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, c) growth in the U.S. Catholic population fueled by immigration, d) the continuing impact of Second Vatican Council, and e) declining participation in sacraments.

Those changes have impacted parish life in the following ways:

1. Reconfigured parish organizational structures have led to larger and more complex parishes and disaffected parishioners.
2. Parishes are no longer homogenous, but multicultural, with melting parish boundaries that were once based on ethnicity.
3. The roles for laity are expanding with nearly 40,000 lay ecclesial ministers today.
4. There are new stresses on parish and diocesan finances tied to
Indian Women's Theological Forum wants inclusive communities

The Indian Women's Theological Forum met in April and began their meeting with a foot washing service symbolizing their service to one another and to the world. They issued a statement at the end of their meeting noting both challenges and commitments.

We are challenged by:
• the nexus between patriarchy, religious hegemony, market fundamentalism and the exploitation of the poor;
• the various exclusions defined by caste, class, gender, religion, language and culture;
• the need of groups to assert their own identities at the risk of excluding the other;
• the market that draws us into a cycle of consumption and waste, destroying nature from both ends by depleting its resources and using it as our dump yard.

We commit ourselves to:
• Building communities of inclusion, reconciliation and service, modeling the liberative symbol of washing of the feet, as illustrated by Jesus;
• Adopting lifestyles that are marked by simplicity and harmony with nature, while making efforts to rejuvenate and conserve our natural resources;
• Entering into partnerships/alliances with individuals, groups and movements who bravely challenge the existing patriarchal development paradigm.

Gutsy Nun Challenges Her Bishops and the Church on
Women's Rights, Women's Equality

MANILA, Philippines – Activist nun and former St. Scholastica's College president Sr. Mary John Mananzan does not share the stand of church leaders regarding the country’s reproductive health (RH) law.

"I am a nun but I am for the reproductive [health] law, because I'm a woman. And I think the bishops overreacted," Mananzan said on Tuesday, May 16, during the She for She forum hosted by the France embassy in Manila.

The Catholic Church has been the strongest critic of Republic Act (RA) 10354 or the RH law. Signed in 2012 by former president Benigno Aquino III, the law grants universal access to contraceptives and other birth control methods.

The law has not been implemented since its passage because of the Supreme Court's temporary restraining order.

Bishops and priests oppose the measure, arguing that it promotes promiscuity and abortion.

But Mananzan said there has been a "lack of integrity" in the opposition to the RH law, because critics have been making false claims.

"A lot of things they say that [are] in the bill is not true," she explained. "It is not for abortion. There are 3 places [in the law] that say abortion is illegal in the Philippines so you cannot say that bill is for abortion. It is not."

Patriarchy in the Church

In her speech, Mananzan also talked about how the Catholic Church is lacking in terms of furthering gender equality and women empowerment.

The activist nun pointed out that women
have yet to take on leadership roles in the Catholic Church, unlike in other churches.

"They are deprived of participation in the major decision-making processes and are denied full ministry in the Church. I am very sorry that I will never see in my lifetime the full ministry given to women in the Catholic Church," she said.

Faggioli warns about the destructive effects of clericalism in today's church

Kaye Oakes interviews Massimo Faggioli about his latest book, Catholicism and Citizenship.

Faggioli thinks clericalism is a problem for both lay Catholics and clergy. It is a particularly destructive force in the church today.

He observes, "One problem is that after the '60s, after Vatican II, there was an attempt to revitalize the importance of the clergy with an emphasis on the common priesthood of all baptized. And we thought the problem [of clericalism] had been in a certain way solved. If you speak of wearing a cassock and that symbolism, it became less important. What we’ve seen in the last 15 years is the resurgence of clericalism in a much more serious way, because we’ve gone back not just to the '60s but before the premodern era. What’s popular in seminaries is that being a priest makes you “ontologically different” from a non-ordained person. This is a very serious and dangerous term, because part of the church before Francis is the temptation to isolate institutions, roles, and functions that are essentially historical. Jesus never instituted any priesthood.

That temptation to isolate those roles
from any attempt to change them is dangerous because it’s an attempt to shield the institutions from changes that have already happened. They are trying to close the barn door when all the animals are gone. That is something new: not even an argument to go back to the past, but a philosophical ecclesiology on steroids.

That’s even more striking because the most serious emergency in the church is the seminaries and the formation of priests. We hear about bishops and priests when they screw up, but hear little about seminaries. I’m afraid there’s something going on there that’s very alarming because [seminaries] have changed little with Francis. So clericalism is part of the emergency today and has consequences for priests, lay Catholics and non-Catholics.”

Obedience is not mere blind capitulation to authority

Marian Ronan has to confess that she is wary of the word obedience. She writes, “So wary, in fact, that I almost declined to review Bradford Hinze’s new theology of the church.” But she is glad she didn’t.

According to Ronan, “Prophetic Obedience is precisely the kind of constructive theology that enables post-Vatican II Catholics like me to overcome the binaries that have hindered us since the election of Pope John Paul II: freedom vs. obedience, the horizontal vs. the vertical, the magisterium vs. the sensus fidelium.

Hinze traces these binaries back to Second Vatican Council itself. He explores many of the ways in which the Vatican II vision of the church as the people of God, of all the baptized on
the road together, impacted a wide range of ecclesial bodies as well as community organizations after the council. And he shows how a conservative faction of the bishops and the Vatican attempted to replace that vision with a 'communion ecclesiology' stressing centralized authority and the magisterium."

Read more

**Challenging Cardinal George Pell on His Claims**

Author Louise Milligan, who reported claims of clergy sexual abuse against Cardinal George Pell last year, writes about the challenges to Cardinal George Pell's claims that he has been leading the fight to clean up clergy sex abuse. Among Pell's challengers are Bishop Geoff Robinson and Bishop Bill Morris.

"Then out of the blue, George Pell comes up with his own thing. When he claims that he was the one that gave the lead, he really just broke ranks with everyone. Certainly, the thing of him coming out early was something everyone felt very critical about."

"The Melbourne bombshell," Robinson later called it, confirming that Pell had been there for all of the discussions on Towards Healing, all of the motions, but hadn't said a word against it.

Robinson knew nothing of the Melbourne Response until Pell made it public without telling any of the other bishops. "He later would claim that he was the first person in Australia to have such a protocol, he was ahead of everybody, in other words. I mean, that's only a very partial truth."

Bishop Bill Morris, who had joined the Bishops Conference in 1993 as Bishop of Toowoomba, says the other bishops were very disappointed.

"Well, this is George, George will go his
own way because George wants to reform the Church according to George Pell," Morris says.

"It would have been much better for the Church in Australia to act as one to bring in a national approach and I am sure those who were close to George would have said that to him."

Read more

A Feminist Writes an Open Letter to Pope Francis on Married Priests

Most Holy Father:

I write to you as a Catholic mother, wife, writer, teacher and student of my own Roman Catholic faith. I write this as "an open letter."

Like so many of my fellow Roman Catholics, I pray, this week, with a special focus on vocations.

Like so many of my fellow Roman Catholics I have celebrated, lately, the possibility that you may be considering loosening the celibacy requirement for our priests. While recognizing that some who are called to the priesthood view celibacy a gift, I know that for many priests, celibacy is not a gift.

I know that we already have married priests in our church, and that for (roughly) the first half of Church history, priests married. I know too that most of our married priests come to us from other traditions as "vir probati." Having served as priests in their original traditions, they convert, undertake preparation for Holy Orders and are ordained into the Apostolic Succession by the Vatican.

I come to thinking about the question of married priests with a belief that sexuality when infused with respect, commitment and love, is a gift from God.
Don't miss these opportunities and events!

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**

**FUTURECHURCH FALL EVENT**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**October 27, 2017**

**Sr. Sandra Schneiders presents:**
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