Please support FutureChurch during our Pentecost Campaign!

FutureChurch and Voice of the Faithful Call on U.S. Bishops to Publicly Support Women Deacons

In a statement released today, FutureChurch and Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) urge U.S. Catholic Bishops to publicly support the restoration of the ancient practice of ordaining women deacons and to petition the Holy See to allow women to function in our Church as permanent deacons.

As Pope Francis’s commission studying the possibility of restoring women deacons continues its work, FutureChurch and Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) urge U.S. Catholic Bishops to publicly support the restoration of the ancient practice of ordaining women deacons and to petition the Holy See to allow women to function in our Church as permanent deacons.

Women have traditionally carried out 80 to 85% of the lay ministry of our Church*, yet they do not have equal access to all positions within the Church or an equal voice in decision-making processes. Since the restoration of the permanent diaconate following the Second Vatican Council, male candidates have been chosen largely...
from among those who already perform diaconal service. Women who likewise are leaders in such ministries should not be deprived of the graces of the sacrament. Further, the declining number of priests and the increasing burden of providing adequate ministry to our people make ordaining women to the diaconate an obvious option for addressing that issue.

Read more

Learn more
Catholicwomendeacons.org

New resources to open discussion with your priest, deacon or bishop! soon!
DeaconChat

Deacon Chat: Resources for starting a conversation about 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. Unfortunately too many Catholics – clergy included – are under-educated on this topic. 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 member of the clergy (your parish priest, deacon, or your local bishop) in a conversation about women deacons.

Learn more and download the
Pope Francis appoints secretary of new congregation on family, laity and life

The new number two at the all-important Dicastery for Family, Laity, and Life is a young Brazilian priest not only in sync with the ideas and outlook of Pope Francis, but who has a long history of friendship and collaboration with the pontiff.

Father Alexandre Awi Mello, national director for the Schönstatt movement in Brazil, has a resumé that any head-hunter would naturally seize on for the role: His experience in youth ministry, years of pastoral work with families, expertise in spiritual direction, and theological naus make him just the man for implementing *Amoris Laetitia* and reaping the fruits of next year’s synod on youth and vocation discernment.

Awi even has a new book on the latter topic - *El Arte De Ayudar* ('The Art of Helping') - just out in Spanish.

Read more

Newly restored areas of the Catacombs of Domitilla unveiled

If you have ever traveled with FutureChurch on a pilgrimage to Rome, you know that the Catacombs of Domitillia is a place where evidence of women's leadership and ministry in the early church can be found.

The Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archeology, which is responsible for the Roman catacombs, has unveiled the latest restorations of the Catacombs of Domitilla south-east of the Eternal City.

According to the German Archaeological Institute, which helped
with the restorations, these are the largest catacombs in Rome. They were unveiled on May 29th.

The underground cemetery contains 26,250 tombs and 228 funeral rooms (cubicoli) with 12km of galleries on four levels.

Read more

**Deafening silence on Mueller confirms key insights about Francis papacy**

German Cardinal Gerhard Müller, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, recently had controversial things to say both about 'Amoris Laetitia,' the pope's document on the family, and on female deacons. The fact few have reacted confirms a key insight about Pope Francis, which is that his network of informal advisers is far more important than organizational charts.

Read more

**Stemming the out-migration of young Catholics**

The old truism that young Catholics leave the church for a period of time and then return when they have children is no longer true.

Kerry Robinson has been dealing with that reality for most of her career. As the founding director of the Leadership Round Table, she understood that the Church's inability to create a pathway for young Catholic leaders was a serious failure – a failure that had solutions.

Read more

**I can't get the Institutional Church out of my system**

Tom Smith writes about his struggles to remain Catholic when he believes there...
is so much the Institution gets wrong.

It used to be more intense, but the struggle is still there. Even now, it is sometimes a battle worthy of war images, but most often it is a quiet, cold conflict that simmers in my soul. I doubt if I will ever get it completely resolved. I may need a couple more lifetimes to be reconciled with it, or, at least, a finely tuned purgatory.

The institutional part of the Catholic Church that once powerfully attracted me now haunts and hurts me. I can’t quite get it out of my system. And this conflict messes with my spiritual life.

When I was a young man, I became a priest after 12 years of training in two greenhouse seminaries.

Read more

**Seeing myself in the Black Madonna**

Evelyn White talks about loss and faith in the discovery of the Black Madonna.

For there, at the top of a stairway, poised upon an ornate gold throne, sat *La Moreneta*, the Black Madonna and Child. Venerated for centuries, the dark-hued, wooden icon draws scores of pilgrims from around the world who believe that the figure holds divine, healing properties.

Dumbstruck before the Black Madonna, I experienced anew the aching loss of my father and Lupe. At the same time, I was struck by the serenity that exuded from the statue and felt a peaceful calm wash over me.

Having come of age during the 1960s "Black is Beautiful" political era, I had grown up seeing myself reflected in images of celebrated African-American women like the activist Angela Davis, the poet Gwendolyn Brooks and the
singer Nina Simone. I had been a firsthand witness to black pride and black achievement, usually against daunting odds.

If police charge Cardinal George Pell...

As Victoria Police deliberate whether or not to lay charges against Cardinal George Pell, they are also weighing up whether to prosecute a potential world leader. This bold notion is not purple media prose. It is simply stating the facts.

Cardinal Pell strenuously denies the allegations made against him.

The Ballarat-born 75-year-old is potentially the pope in waiting. All it takes is for Pope Francis to die suddenly, and one of the 120-odd Cardinals will be the next pope. It could be Cardinal Pell.

Cardinal Pell is the head of the Vatican secretariat for the economy. Effectively he is the third in charge of the 1.2 billion-member Catholic Church. The Cardinal has diplomatic immunity as a Vatican official, and Australia has no extradition treaty.

In the modern era, laying serious or criminal charges against a Cardinal-Archbishop has not been done in free and democratic nations where immunity could apply.

It has been done under communist regimes, but not the free world. There is also the matter of Archbishop Wilson of Adelaide who was charged under Section 316 of the NSW Crimes Act. But Archbishop Wilson is not a Cardinal.

There are two shocking prior cases involving Americans really worth recalling. They concern Cardinal Archbishop Bernard Law of Boston, and Vatican banker Archbishop Paul Marcinkus.
Will Pope Francis's reforms last?

Pope Francis’ Church is the complete opposite of a clerical Church. It is a Church at the service of the Gospel, and not a Church preoccupied solely with its institutional survival.

Pope Francis’ Church is not a Roman church. He is working to limit the influence of Curia cardinals by calling on grassroots bishops, e.g. the famous C9 cardinals group, to advise him, and by placing greater weight on the notion of synodality.

Knowledgeable Vatican commentators also note quietly that very few documents are now being published by the Roman dicasteries. Take, for example, the activity of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

This body previously issued multiple statements on every conceivable topic with the sole objective of reminding the faithful of prohibitions and warnings.

Even the formidable Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seems to be in hibernation. In Pope Francis’ view, it is primarily the national bishops conferences or continental bishops conferences that should be taking pastoral initiatives.

Why I wrote about the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community

James Martin, S.J. was disturbed. Not only by the horror and violence of the shooting of 49 LGBTQI people in Orlando, but by the lack of response by so many bishops to the reality of that crime. What was missing in the outcry of most bishops to the horror of those murders was an acknowledgement of
who the victims were and why they were murdered – a critical indicator of just how this too many in leadership in our church treat our LGBTQI sisters and brothers.

Read more

Francis shakes up church with cardinal appointments

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis has been appointing cardinals from far-flung parts of the world—choosing men who appear to be toiling away at pastoral work with little or no interest in becoming “princes of the church.”

Next month, during their council, or consistory, Francis will formally induct five more of them into the exclusive club, meaning that he will have appointed close to half of those who will elect his successor.

Critics have pointed out that the college is unrepresentative of a rapidly globalizing church. The group that elected the first Latin American pope in 2013 was 52 percent European (and even they are overwhelmingly Italian), even though less than a quarter of Catholics came from the continent.

This is a criticism that the pope shares. On May 21, when he announced the new group that includes, for the first time, bishops from Laos, Mali, El Salvador and Sweden, he noted that they “come from different parts of the world, showing the catholicity of the church.”

Read more

The Catholic Imagination, Then and Now

I recently spoke, alongside my colleague Dominic Preziosi, at Fordham University’s Lincoln Center Campus at a conference on “The
Joining us on the panel was *America* Editor Matt Malone, and that magazine’s Executive Editor Kerry Weber; former *Commonweal* editor and long-time contributor Margaret O’Brien Steinfels was the moderator. Thanks to Angela O’Donnell, associate director of Fordham’s Curran Center for American Catholic Studies, for inviting us to participate.

The conference was, at least in part, an extended response to the poet Dana Gioia’s 2013 essay in *First Things* about what he characterized as the crisis of the contemporary Catholic writer and the relative absence of a Catholic literary presence in the larger secular culture. Gioia looked back to the immediate post-World War II years as the high-water mark for the visibility and influence of Catholic writers in America. Near the end of Gioia’s essay he wrote: “The necessary work of writers matters very little unless it is recognized and supported by a community of critics, educators, journalists, and readers.”

I certainly agree.

Read more

**Cardinal Mueller reaffirms "No" on women deacons**

Will Cardinal Mueller, Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, win the day when it comes to women deacons and communion for divorced and remarried Catholics? While it is clear that he holds the line for those Catholics who consider themselves traditionalists, it seems clear that Pope Francis is working around his authority. John Allen, like other Vaticanistas, makes the case that Pope Francis’s silence on Mueller’s latest EWTN comments is proof that his influence continues to wane.
Don't miss these opportunities and events!

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

FUTURECHURCH FALL EVENT

SAVE THE DATE!
October 27, 2017

Sr. Sandra Schneiders presents:

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

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
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

Other Events of Interest

SACRED THREADS CENTER INVITES YOU TO AN EVENT WITH SISTER JOAN
The Role of the Public Intellectual

Saturday, July 15, 2017

PLACE: Fontbonne Academy
The Sisters of St. Joseph
Convocation Center
930 Brook Road, Milton, MA

TIME: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM
9:00 AM - On Site Registration
COST: $40 (Sacred Threads' Members receive a 10% discount)
$25 Religious and Students

Register Here

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