Did you miss an issue of our weekly FOCUS E-News? Catch up!

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**Join us for our Fall Event**

**October 27, 2017**

*Sr. Sandra Schneiders discusses the Gospel of John as a model for parish/community life today*

**Buy a virtual ticket and you will be able to see the event livestreamed!**

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**Join our 2nd teleconference in our series on Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life**

*Ed Hahnenberg*

**Emerging Models of Ministry on October 18, 2017**

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**From the Executive Director**

It is with profound sadness that we have learned of the sudden death of Barbara Blaine, co-founder of Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests. **Jason Berry**, who knew Blaine through his own reporting on clergy sex abuse, may have captured her enduring spirit best.

"She was obsessed and her obsession was with justice. That's a lonely road," Berry said. "I've known very few people who had that kind of steely
tenacity and commitment."

As we mourn her loss, we also celebrate her enormous sacrifice and gift to the church in the name of justice and healing for victims and survivors of clergy sex abuse.

Barbara Blaine, Presente!

**Lifting the Lid**

Kudos to the Australians, again, for their unrelenting drive to pierce the pious fabrications that have covered over the terror so many children, their families, and communities have faced as those entrusted to pastor them perpetrated crimes instead.

A *new 379 page University report* by researchers at the Centre for Global Research at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University takes a deep and wide plunge into systemic ills that have been at the root of clergy sex abuse and the cover up. *Here are some of the RMIT findings:*

- Popes and bishops created a culture of secrecy, leading to a series of gross failures in transparency, accountability, openness and trust as they endeavoured to protect the Church’s reputation as an all-holy institution above all else, even at the expense of children’s safety.

- Priest and religious predators have benefited from easy access to children in parishes and schools, particularly those living in one-priest presbyteries and
with access to a car. The risk was especially high in countries like Australia and Ireland which historically had a large number of orphanages and residential schools.

- The risk of predation is highest in residential settings. That risk continues today, particularly in India and Italy, which have a significant proportion of the Church’s remaining 9,500 orphanages.

- Pope Pius X’s 1910 decision to lower the age at which children make their first confession to seven years indirectly contributed to putting more children at risk.

- Young and vulnerable Catholic children, especially boys, were and remain at risk from psychosexually immature, sexually deprived and deeply frustrated priests and religious brothers lacking intimacy, particularly those who have not resolved their own sexual identity and whose thinking is deeply distorted and mutated towards children.

- While not the direct cause, mandatory celibacy has been and remains the major precipitating risk factor for child sexual abuse. The best studies across the world show that about one in 15 priests offended, though rates differed across dioceses and among religious congregations.

- Young and vulnerable Catholic children, especially boys, were and remain at risk from psychosexually immature, sexually deprived and deeply frustrated priests and religious brothers lacking intimacy,
particularly those who have not resolved their own sexual identity and whose thinking is deeply distorted and mutated towards children.

- Though homosexuality is not a direct cause of abuse, the deeply homophobic environment within the Church and its seminaries, based on the teaching that homosexuality is an intrinsically disordered state and that all gays must lead a celibate life, contributes to psychosexual immaturity.

- While there are other factors, the risk of offending has been much higher among religious brothers with little contact with women – educated at male-only schools and trained for religious life in male-only institutions before being appointed to male-only schools and living in all-male communities. The lack of the feminine and the denigration of women within Church structures is one key, underlying risk factor in the abuse.

Writing for National Catholic Reporter, Kieran Tapsell surfaces a few other important findings in the report:

- The church from its earliest times regarded child sexual abuse as a sin, punishable in the next life, but by the Fourth century it was also seen as a crime punishable by imprisonment, as a minimum. That tradition was turned on its head when the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* abrogated seven papal and church council decrees that required clerics who abused children to be handed over to the civil
authorities. Five years later, in 1922, Pope Pius XI (1922-39) issued his instruction, *Crimen Sollicitationis* requiring all information about child sexual abuse to be subject to the strictest secrecy.

- The incidence of abuse in Australia has dropped significantly over the last 30 years, but then many of the systemic features that provided opportunities for abuse have declined or disappeared: the fall in the number of priests and religious; Catholic schools now staffed almost exclusively by lay people; the collapse of the altar boy system; and the church's withdrawal from boarding schools and orphanages. That is not the case overseas.

- Since the early Middle Ages, the church has had a problem with priests soliciting sex in the confessional. Papal and council decrees in 1227, 1622 and 1741 condemned the practice. The Inquisition dealt with many cases of solicitation, most of them with women, sometimes men, but rarely young children because confession was only available to Catholics after the age of 12-14. Pius X (1903-14) lowered the age to 7, thus providing pedophiles with new opportunities.

- The Australian Royal Commission finds 7 percent of diocesan priests are abusers. The authors cast doubt on the 4.3 percent in
the United States as revealed by the John Jay report given that they were derived from responses from the American bishops rather than from the production of documents on which the Dutch, Irish and Australian inquiries relied.

Often we talk about the saints of the past, but today, I find myself deeply grateful for those who are fighting criminality within the church. We are getting closer to the justice and transparency we seek because of the likes of Barbara Blaine, Marie Collins, and the researchers at RMIT. Thank you and all those who have rallied for victims/survivors in the church. May your work continue to produce greater transparency and hope for all God's people.

Deborah Rose-Milavec
Executive Director

**OPAL participants seek to learn more about emerging models of religious life at weekend conference with FutureChurch**

On September 23 and 24, sixty women and men participated in the first gathering of Ohio Pennsylvania Associate Leadership (OPAL). Associate members from religious communities in Ohio and Pennsylvania came to dream about the future of associate life within the broader context of the shifting paradigms swirling all around in the Catholic Church and in religious communities.
Deborah Rose-Milavec, as part of FutureChurch's Emerging Models of Parish and Community Life, offered statistics and stories of what is and what is emerging in both parish life and in religious life.

The first challenge was how to respond to the declining number of priests (down 34% since 1965 with ordination numbers down 58%) and the declining number of vowed religious women (down 72% since 1965). She asked the group, "Is this a train hitting a brick wall? A blessing? Or both?"

While expressing fear about the future, many also saw opportunities and hope in the increasing number of lay persons who are serving today. The number of lay professional ministers has increased 117% since 1995 and the number of lay ecclesial ministers has increased 81% in that same time period. The number of affiliates/associates in religious communities has increased 279% since 1995.

The group was reminded of the words of Sr. Ilia Delio who said, "We are becoming something that is not yet seen or known." Further, we must "let go of structures that prevent convergence and a deepening of consciousness and attend to new patterns that are emerging in our midst."

Rose-Milavec shared a slice of the dozens of innovations occurring in both parish and religious life, a diversity that will enrich our understanding of who
God is amongst us, and engender a more vibrant, robust, and sustaining faith life.

One of the participants remarked, "The conferenced offered very fine, informative and challenging input. It has certainly fired up our associates as we look to the future."

To have a conversation about emerging models in your community or parish, contact Deborah Rose-Milavec, Executive Director of FutureChurch.

To join in our educational series on emerging models CLICK HERE.

**Frank DeBernardo of New Ways Ministry sets the record straight**

Francis DeBernardo writes that Michael Sean Winters’ recent column, "Focus on Mychal Judge as a 'gay saint' is problematic," is misleading on several counts.

First, Winters bases his opinion of the possible canonization of Judge on an article from Slate, but it doesn’t appear that he investigated further than that one source. The Slate article represents reporter Ruth Graham’s perspective, but that is not necessarily the perspective of all those who would like to see Judge declared a saint. New Ways Ministry’s role in the canonization research is not synonymous with Graham’s perspective or with Winters’ implied speculation about our motives.
Second, he makes an unproven claim about New Ways Ministry’s role in the 2010 election of the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and he never contacted New Ways Ministry to verify the accuracy of his information. Read more

**Pope Francis confirms his controversial vision of family and marriage in remaking John Paul II Institute**

Nicholas Senenze writes that the pope is broadening his approach to marriage and the family by replacing the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family with an institute focused on implementing "Amoris Laetitia". This is a contentious undertaking, given that his opponents on these topics are as vociferous as ever. Read more

**Pope creates new institute**

**Female ambassadors say Rome has a long way to go in empowering women for governance and ministry**

Inés San Martín and Claire Giangravè report that three female ambassadors from different parts of the world and religious beliefs all agree that the Vatican is a pretty cozy place for women diplomats, but they also concur that when it comes to the role of women in the decision making process inside the Church, there's still a long way to go.
Ambassador Agnes Adjaho said, “When we talk about the situation of women in the Church, we always think about the pope and the Vatican. But there’s much that has to be done in our countries, at the level of priests.”

She cited specifically “the formation of priests, who are not prepared to have a relationship with women in the Church as a partner in evangelization, in the promotion of values,” Adjaho said.

Who are the 62?

Joshua McElwee reports that while a few dozen scholars are calling Pope Francis' teachings heretical, other prominent theologians and scholars say the accusations are marked by hypocrisy and represent a marginal fringe view among academics. They noted that the 62 signatories of the letter are mainly obscure figures, with some even listed with relatively minor descriptions such as "diocesan priest" or "religious."

"The first reaction I had after reading the document concerned the signatories," Richard Gaillardetz, a noted theologian at Boston College, told NCR. "The prominence given to the number of signatories ... masks the fact that these are really marginal figures."

Gaillardetz, a former president of the Catholic Theological Association of America, said that while the signatories have the
right to put their views forward, "they need to be acknowledged as the extreme and self-marginalized voices that they are."

Massimo Faggioli, a theologian and historian at Villanova University, noted that only one bishop joined the group: Bernard Fellay, who was unlawfully ordained a prelate in 1988 and leads the schismatic Society of St. Pius X. The signatory list, Faggioli said, has "no cardinal and no bishop, in a Catholic Church that has more than 200 cardinals and more than 5000 bishops."

Read more

A nationwide survey on the parish Mass

The editors of Commonweal wanted to know -- after years of dwindling attendance, indifferent liturgies, and a contracting priesthood, what can be done to bring people closer to the Mass that has sustained Christians for so long?

In their survey of twelve parishes, they found a variety of answers.

Tom Baker writes that when people in our area shop for a parish, my parish is the one that wins. At least, that’s what former parish shoppers tell me. Maybe over at our competitors, they hear the same thing from those who fled our parish, but I choose to believe otherwise.

We have four well-attended weekend Masses in a modern,
sunlit, semi-circular church that holds about six hundred people. Collections are the envy of parishes several times our size. Baptisms outnumber funerals by a wide margin. Outreach programs attract plenty of volunteers. In recent years, as central New Jersey has changed, so has our parish: Asian and Filipino families mix with the long-established Italian and Irish émigrés from Brooklyn and Jersey City. Every week, seeing these friends and strangers coming forward for the Eucharist, the bond uniting us seems something of a miracle, and I am grateful for the place. Read more

More Vatican intrigue as former leader of finance reform accused of spying on personnel

Gerald O’Connell reports that some days ago, Mr. Libero Milone, the first auditor-general who resigned mysteriously last June, called several outlets to his lawyer’s office in Rome to break his silence regarding his dismissal.

He spoke for three hours, according to Corriere della Sera, which published an interview with him today. He said that he decided to speak now because news had been leaked “by a power group” in the Vatican that challenged his reputation and professionalism and because of the way that he
Interpreting Vatican II in a divided church

Richard Gaillardetz writes that our society’s toxic “culture wars” have colonized too many sectors within the Catholic Church. One thinks, for example, of the “liturgy wars” concerning what constitutes “authentic liturgical reform” or the recent disputes regarding Pope Francis’s pastoral accommodations for the divorced and remarried. At the level of Catholic ecclesiology, the “culture wars” have morphed into the “council wars,” a fight over the authentic interpretation of Vatican II.

The latest entry in these acrimonious debates is The Reception of Vatican II, a sequel to an earlier collection of essays on the Vatican II documents (Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition, 2008). Unfortunately, the ideological agenda of the earlier volume continues to inform this new collection. There are some helpful essays to be sure (Driscoll, Wright, Meconi, and DeVille, to name a few) but, as with the previous collection, the fundamental flaw of this volume ultimately overwhelms its virtues. That flaw lies in the guiding convictions of the editors, Matthew Levering and Matthew Lamb, that the authentic reception of the council has been compromised by theologians who appeal irresponsibly to Vatican II in support of their heterodox views. The editors draw on Pope
Benedict XVI’s famous 2005 address to the Roman Curia in which he denounced readings of the council based on a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture,” promoting instead a “hermeneutic of reform.”

**Douthat and Faggioli to debate?**

Catholic News Agency reports that New York Times columnist Ross Douthat invited Villanova theologian Massimo Faggioli to a debate, and Faggioli has said that he would be open to the idea.

“I am really looking forward to meeting him in person, as soon as is possible. I don’t know if this event is going to happen, in what form. I am totally open to it,” Dr. Massimo Faggioli, a theology professor at Villanova University, told CNA of Ross Douthat’s invitation to a debate. Douthat, a Catholic, is an author and op-ed columnist at the New York Times, writing on religion, politics, morality, and culture. Faggioli is a theology professor, church historian, and Catholic commentator at Villanova University. Douthat and Faggioli have both been referred to as “culture warriors,” one a conservative, the other a liberal.

**Text Link**

**Reviewing Paul Lakeland's new book, The Wounded Angel**

Edward T. Wheeler writes that the central argument of Paul
Lakeland's newest book, *The Wounded Angel*, rests on a recognition familiar to those who love literature—namely, that paraphrase or analysis can never encompass what a poem or novel (or any other work of art) does to us when we engage it.

This surplus of meaning, Lakeland believes, constitutes a form of transcendence. From this assertion he will have us understand that the act of reading (or interpreting any serious work of art) offers a parallel to the act of faith.

To convince us of this claim, Lakeland must first define faith and reading as in a basic way parallel, then mark their intersection through imaginative power. This and other tasks taken on in *The Wounded Angel* involve some heavy lifting. Not only does Lakeland lay out the intellectual and historical structures for a definition of faith, he also takes a stance on what constitutes reading. Finally he defines the kind of imagination that can take one beyond aesthetic pleasure into the experience of the divine.

**From the beginning, we have argued**

Joshua Kinlaw writes that Christians have always been a fractious bunch. Within twenty-five years of Jesus’ death, St. Paul was warning Christians at Corinth against taking one another to court.

Beneath countless reasons for
division lies a familiar, fundamental pattern. Some of us prioritize theological precision more than others. Among those who do, anything resembling a serious dilution of doctrine triggers an effort to stave off heterodoxy—which in turn morphs into an excuse for division. Others of us, meanwhile, see little point in doctrinal exactitude when there are so many social needs to meet and political wrongs to right. The result of these conflicting priorities is discord—a discord easily amplified by the use of weaponized adjectives. Thus “orthodox” believers separate themselves from “progressive,” or “gospel-centered” from ecumenical, in a perennial effort to distinguish “good” from “bad.” Pope Francis recently offered an eloquent summary in his Pentecost homily: Christian unity is the space between “diversity without unity,” on the one hand, and “unity without diversity,” on the other.

Read more

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You won't want to miss these FutureChurch events!

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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

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For more information contact:
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