Women Break New Ground Inside the Vatican

We Have a Dream
On March 8, 2015, International Women’s Day, four women from Sweden, India, Rome and the United Kingdom dared to dream aloud about their hopes for the future for women’s roles in the Catholic Church. From inside the Vatican, this first-of-its-kind discussion under the auspices of Voices of Faith (voicesoffaith.org) evokes hope—a sign that Francis’s quest for greater dialogue in the Church is real and includes women.

In an hour-long panel discussion led by FutureChurch’s Deborah Rose-Milavec, Ulla Gudmundson, diplomat and Sweden’s former ambassador to the Holy See; Astrid Lobo-Gajiwala, scientist and feminist leader from India; Gudrun Sailer, journalist for Vatican Radio; and Tina Beattie, professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Roehampton in London talked about their experiences in the church and their dreams and hopes for women’s leadership, ministry and roles.

Where are the women?
Lesley-Anne Knight, executive director for The Elders and opening host for the Voices of Faith event, began the day with a stark question, “Where are the women?”—a prophetic question repeated by Rose-Milavec at the start of the panel. Throughout the hour, there were times when the room grew very still with the weight of the words being spoken or lit with laughter and applause as the four touched the audience’s hearts, minds and funny bones with their keen insights.

While Gudrun Sailer believes that the Church has made great strides by including women, she dreamt of a church in which governance was not tied to ordination and where the mentality of the clergy changed such that the number of women undersecretaries in the dicasteries would grow from two to ten or twenty in the next couple of years.

Tina Beattie’s comments seemed to flow from her daughter’s question, “Mum, why on earth would you hang on in a church...when in everywhere but the Church you are recognized and valued for who you are?” Beattie spoke glowingly of Pope Francis’s Evangelii Gaudium but pointed quickly to the blind spot in this encyclical and Catholic social teaching in general saying, “Every day 800 of the world’s poorest women die through childbirth related causes...yet, you will search in vain for a reference to maternal mortality in Catholic social teaching or even in the most glowing encyclicals about poverty.”

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From the Director’s Desk

As we celebrate 25 years at FutureChurch there are many reasons to rejoice as we move toward the future.

While fear-driven leadership casts a long shadow some days, it is truly exciting to witness the energy of Catholics who are turning challenges into opportunities as they faithfully act together in communities of hope and love.

Catholics who defend the faith: In the Archdiocese of New York, Catholics are courageously and creatively resisting Cardinal Dolan’s plan to merge or shutter their parishes. Our Lady of Peace parishioners celebrated their centennial anniversary three years early to draw attention to the history and vibrancy of their parish as well as the risks they face under archdiocesan merger plans. Many Catholics throughout the archdiocese insisted that Cardinal Dolan follow canon law and make the decrees available so that parishes could exercise their right to appeal his decision. Because of their tenacity, the decrees were finally made available. Sadly, the lack of transparency by Catholic hierarchs continues to erode the trust that was once taken for granted in Catholic parishes.

Catholics who will not be silenced: Catholics have been speaking up about the issues that will be discussed at the 2015 Ordinary Synod on the Family in October. Over the past two years, thousands of Catholics completed surveys in order to let our bishops know where change is needed; reached out to their leaders seeking a year of dialogue in the lead up to the synod; urged bishops to widen the circle of invitees who will witness about family life at the synod; and engaged in listening sessions to hear another one and to share those stories with synod delegates who will be voting on new pastoral practices. The Association of US Catholic Priest’s synod survey report is another hopeful sign of what priests want in terms of new pastoral practices. Women, too, are organizing. A new resource, Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table is currently being published by Paulist Press and will contain essays and stories by recognized feminist theologians on divorce and remarriage, same sex relationships, contraception and other synod topics. This resource will be distributed to synod leaders and delegates. You can get a copy from FutureChurch with a donation during our current Pentecost campaign. Overwhelmingly, faithful Catholics are calling for a very different model of church where all are welcome and where mercy and love abide.

Catholics who do not back down: As news broke in Minneapolis–St. Paul that Archbishop John Neinstedt had resigned, the outstanding work of Catholics shines brightly. They demanded that their leaders act in accord with the dictates of the Gospel in protecting children. With Archbishop Neinstedt’s resignation, they are also calling for input in the selection of the next bishop. The Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, has already sent a list to the Apostolic Nuncio of “proven senior pastors… outstanding candidates to be named bishop.” They say, “Rome needs to hear the voices of experience and judgment of local Catholics in the selection of our next leader,” as they call for “a new attitude of inclusiveness.” (http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/twin-resignations-twin-cities-called-prudent-move-painful-process)

Women with a holy impatience: A 2009 Pew Study showed that 39% of those who left the Catholic Church did so because of the Church’s treatment of women. That is a stunning statistic that should fuel our constant work for gender justice and equality in the Church. Yet, on my list of reasons to be excited to be a Catholic right now, are the breakthroughs occurring in the woman-Vatican dialogue regarding women’s roles in the Church. Several events show how the landscape is brightening.

The Voices of Faith event in Rome broke new ground when a panel of four women spoke courageously about their experiences in the Church, as well as their aspirations for women’s ministry and leadership. Out of that effort came the opportunity to bring the voices of Catholic women to the synod. Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table is a resource written by Catholic women...
From the Director’s Desk, continued from page 2

speaking to the issues being discussed through stories and theological reflection. It will be distributed to synod leaders. To get the transcript of the panel discussion or to obtain a copy of this exciting synod resource, go to our website.

The following month, “Donne nella Chiesa: Prospettive in dialogo” created another space for a new kind of dialogue with women at the Pontifical University Antonianum. Sister Mary Melone, the first woman appointed rector of a Pontifical University, led the event. Kate McElwee of Women’s Ordination Conference attended and noted how women were challenging tradition. (read more at their blog at womensordination.org). In one exchange, Professor Cettina Miliello questioned Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi’s (Pontifical Council for Culture) views on gender rejecting his “demonization of gender” theory as a misrepresentation explaining, “gender…is an expression of nature, not a threat to it.”

In other arenas, women have been helping shape some of the most critical reforms in the Church. Marie Collins, an outspoken advocate for victims of clergy sex abuse has long been on record saying the Church must hold bishops accountable. She was chosen to be one of eight women on a 17-person Commission for the Protection of Children that reports directly to the Pope. The newly announced tribunal for holding bishops accountable is a sign her advocacy is being taken seriously.

In the world of Vatican finances, Elizabeth McCaul, considered “the only bullet left” to pull the Vatican Bank back from the brink of disaster after decades of corrupt practices, has put the institution on a path toward reform.

When it comes to powerful women leading Catholic Institutions, Carolyn Woo, the first woman appointed to head Catholic Relief Services rounds out a three-woman trinity in leadership along with Sr. Carol Keehan of the Catholic Health Association and Sr. Donna Markum of Catholic Charities USA.

Idea and strategies for expanding the roles of women in the Catholic Church abound. The Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India is one important model. And a growing number of women from across diverse constituencies believe a commission/council similar to the Commission for the Protection of Children or the G-9 could be very effective in helping the Pope devise concrete ways of bringing more women into leadership. These are ideas worth pursuing.

DEBORAH ROSE-MILAVEC
Executive Director

FutureChurch: Celebrating the Past in Order to Build on It

FutureChurch is 25 years old! Thanks to the vision and efforts of Sr. Christine Schenk, Fr. Louis Trivison and thousands of FutureChurch partners along the way, we celebrate 25 years of working for a church where all the baptized have the opportunity participate fully in the life and leadership of the church. Not just a trip down memory lane, we remember our roots in order to work for the future of the Church we love.

A bit of history

In the summer of 1990, in response to a request from the elected council of the Community of St. Malachi, a committee was formed to deal with issues of internal reform in our Catholic Church. The council had endorsed the Resurrection Parish Council position that the centrality of the Eucharist outweighs disciplinary considerations of the state-in-life and gender of ordained ministers. Prompted by the growing shortage of priests, Resurrection called on the United States bishops to look beyond substituting Communion services for Eucharistic Celebrations in priestless parishes, and to explore the more desirable options of allowing both the return of married priests to active ministry and the ordination of women. The Community of St. Malachi Council concurred and addressed its own letter of concern to the National Council of Catholic Bishops. The council also issued a news release to this effect.

Members of the two parishes then met to discuss their joint position and concerns. A need was recognized to network with members of other parishes throughout the Cleveland Diocese around issues of Church reform because no other organization was addressing these issues. Pastors, pastoral associates and lay leaders of some 20 faith communities were invited to an initial meeting to explore ways of educating and advocating around FutureChurch concerns, especially as they relate to the Eucharist.

On October 16, 1990, some 33 people from 16 faith communities met at St. Malachi Center to form the FutureChurch coalition. Members of parishes throughout the diocese gathered for monthly meetings at the center. Resurrection had earlier appealed to all parish councils in the diocese to discuss its concerns and more than 20 formally endorsed the Resurrection resolution. A number of others discussed the resolution and wrote their own letters of concern to the bishops. Members of many of these parishes regularly attended FutureChurch meetings. New people joined the group and individual parishioners shared what was being done on their homefronts to support FutureChurch issues. FutureChurch identified a mission statement, goals and leadership.

FutureChurch worked to maintain a cordial, non-adversarial relationship with diocesan authorities and made visible the remarkable degree of grass roots support for responsible change that existed in the Cleveland Diocese, striving to provide diocesan leadership with the consensus needed to identify the “sensus fidelium” (sense of the faithful) which witnesses the Spirit’s leading among us and provides the basis for doctrinal development. Among the early reforms adopted by FutureChurch were the following: continued on page 4
Celebrating the Past continued from page 3

1. We call upon Church officials to incorporate women at all levels of ministry and decision-making.

2. We call upon the Church to open the priesthood to women and married men, including resigned priests, so that the Eucharist may continue to be the center of the spiritual life of all Catholics.

3. Just as the U.S. bishops invited participation in developing their teachings on social justice for their pastoral letters on peace and economic justice, we call for extensive consultation on such issues as officially permitting divorced and remarried Catholics to receive the Eucharist, intercommunion, selection of bishops, etc.

FutureChurch supported Archbishop Rembert Weakland in his rejection of lay-led Communio services and Liturgies of the Word in parishes without resident priests as solutions to the shortage of priests.

Weakland wrote: “Both of these solutions, especially over many years and perhaps for the life of a whole generation, frighten me. They are simply not adequate for the spiritually healthy. They could lead to a new kind of church that is not rooted in the one we know and that has come to us from the apostles. We would not be a eucharistic community in the fullest sense of that term.”

Archbishop Weakland also rejected such solutions as creating “mega-parishes” or requiring priests to “circuit ride” to administer the sacraments. He was supported publicly by Archbishop Hunthausen of Seattle, Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester and Bishop Francis Quinn of Sacramento, among others.

FutureChurch called for an end to the unjust discriminating policies which prevent married priests from teaching in Catholic colleges and seminaries, or to be lectors and Eucharistic ministers at Mass. Rights open to all baptized should not be denied to resigned priests, especially those who have received from Rome dispensions to marry.

FutureChurch distinguished between Church practice and Church doctrine. Practices such as laws of fast and abstinence, holy days of obligation, celibacy, etc., could always be changed as the needs of the faithful dictate. Doctrine is open to discussion as long as it does not center on the essentials of our Faith (cf. the Creed and Sacraments).

FutureChurch accepted the teaching of Vatican II that there is a hierarchy of truths in Catholic doctrine -- with some more important than others; i.e., Eucharist is more important than the gender of the celebrant.

During its first year FutureChurch co-sponsored Cleveland presentations by three renowned theologians: Dr. Bernard Cooke, Dr. Anthony Padovano and Fr. Eugene LaVerdiere. The first event of its second year was a fundraising dinner with close to 700 in attendance. Featured was a talk by noted author and columnist Father Richard P. McBrien, of Notre Dame University. His topic: “The Future of the Catholic Church… Eucharist…Priesthood.”

International meeting of Catholic priest associations and lay reform groups call on Francis to keep local parishes

From April 13 - 17, 2015, thirty-eight Catholics from priest associations and church reform organizations across ten countries met in Limerick, Ireland, to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing the Church today and to work together for change. The second such meeting since the initial meeting in Bregenz, Austria, in November 2013, men and women, both ordained and lay, developed common strategies for addressing — among a number of issues — parish closings.

Austrian priest, Fr. Helmut Schüller of the Pfarrer Initiative who issued a “Call to Disobedience” in 2011 and visited 15 cities in the United States during the first Catholic Tipping Point tour, called on the group to take action in the face of worldwide parish mergers and closings and urged Catholics everywhere to resist the inertia of Church leaders in addressing the problem.

The group adopted an Open Letter to Pope Francis urging him to open ordination and develop new models of pastoral ministry and management to keep local parishes open rather than merging or closing them. The letter also urges Pope Francis to establish “a new culture of co-responsibility and joint decision-making in all structures of our Church in order to tackle the problems we face together.” https://www.futurechurch.org/sites/default/files/OPEN_LETTER_POPE_FRANCIS_MAY2015.pdf

Twenty four international priest associations and reform groups signed the letter. Those representing the United States were FutureChurch, the National Coalition of American Nuns, New Ways Ministry and Women’s Ordination Conference. FutureChurch sent the letter to all the bishops and leaders in the United States.

On May 23, 2015, FutureChurch received a reply from Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Carol Maria Viganò, who wrote, “I can certainly agree with the underlying premise of your organization’s open letter, which is the great need for more vibrant and dynamic parishes… though I suspect it will come as no surprise to you that we might not agree on all of the solutions, it is important to name the issue, which I applaud you for having done so well.”

FutureChurch and others from the Limerick group are asking for a follow up meeting with Archbishop Viganò to talk about the urgent situation we face in the United States and to discuss what we can do together to reduce parish mergers and closings.
Catholics in the northeast, mid-Atlantic and northern Midwest regions of our country are accustomed to merging of parishes. Elsewhere Catholics experience megasizing, whether of church buildings or parish territory. These seem to be major elements of the U.S. Catholic Church’s current pastoral strategy.

Why? A major reason is the accelerating decline in the number of priests, diocesan or religious, available to serve. Consider diocesan priest numbers. CARA reports there are 26,265 diocesan clergy in the U.S., of whom 8365 are retired. That leaves 17,900 priests available to pastor the 17,800 current parishes that cover our land, down from 19,000-plus. Already 3500 parishes are without a resident pastor.

The situation is getting dramatically worse. By 2019, fully half of the current 17,900 diocesan priests in active full-time service are expected to join the ranks of the retired. That’s collapse. That’s catastrophic. What will the likely response be? Merge more parishes? Close small churches? Build megachurches so that one priest can say Mass for thousands instead of hundreds, and pastor multi-thousands?

Is anyone asking whether that pattern of dealing with the situation is pastorally effective? To use Pope Francis’s imagery, does it enhance the ability of priests to know their parishioners well enough that they can begin to smell like their sheep? Does it facilitate the ability of priests to move out to mix and mingle with the people where they are, rather than require the people to gather where he is present? Are we heading toward a stadium Catholicism with a lone priest standing at an altar on the pitching mound, one too old or worn out to throw much of a pitch? Many priests still in service are counting the days to when they can retire from the relentless grind which is wearing them down, draining them not only of energy and often health but also of joy.

It’s a puzzlement if not a scandal that our bishops collectively – good, dutiful, sincere and intelligent men – are passively and unimaginatively accepting this near term future for our church. For decades they have urged prayer for vocations, but the situation continues to worsen. Pope Francis has opened a door for episcopal conferences to propose to him a strategy – ordaining qualified married men (viri probati) — that could quickly arrest the collapsing corps of active priests. Still our bishops are not talking about that option publicly, not even among themselves. Perhaps deep down they don’t really see themselves as bishops, as apostles, as leaders of local churches, as agents of what must be done. They seem to be waiting for Godot, which means “waiting for God to” do something. Hello! God acts through us!

This should not, must not, cannot continue. We, the baptized and ordained, who are responsible for today’s church and the future church, must pester our bishops, as Pope Francis and the Spirit call us to do.

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**New Book: Rape Culture and Spiritual Violence:**

*Religion, Testimony and Visions of Healing*

by Gina Messina-Dyert, Ph.D.

*Rape Culture and Spiritual Violence* examines sexual violence against women, how religion and society contribute to a rape culture, and the extreme suffering endured by rape victims as a result. Using the testimony of women who have experienced both rape and the consequences of rape culture – from a range of religious, cultural, ethnic and social contexts – the book explores both the suffering and healing of rape victims from WWII to today.

This book was an incredibly important project to me and is one I spent much time researching. Having spent ten years working with survivors of rape and domestic violence, questions regarding God’s love and mercy, and theodicy often surfaced. I have always found it troubling that anyone would believe that God is a punishing God – especially in the way of sexual violence. And so, I set out to examine why such a mindset would exist and how those victimized by sexual assault, as well as the larger rape culture, can heal from the wounds of both physical and cultural violence.

Victim invisibility, the inability to express pain, and the tendency to assume shame and self-blame are all considered. The role of society in shaping and reinforcing these responses is analyzed, particularly in relation to how society operates to enhance victims’ emotional and spiritual trauma, a trauma which can result in spiritual death, in no longer being able to view the self in relation to the divine. The study explores the possibility for multiple spiritual resurrections within the practice of daily life in order to challenge rape culture and encourages both individual healing and social change through the shamanistic practice *Han-Pu-Ri*.
Creating New Momentum in the Discussion of Optional Celibacy

In 2014 FutureChurch launched a renewed effort focused on the discussion of opening ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. The long standing and passionate optional celibacy advisory committee wrote An Open Letter to United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that called upon them to be “courageous” and to look closely at the needs of Catholics in the United States. As we enter into the second year of this pursuit, FutureChurch and its supporters are engaged in dialogue and emboldened by a pope who calls us to “make a mess.”

Adding to this effort the Association of United States Catholic Priests (AUSCP) approved a proposal at their 2014 annual assembly asking the USCCB to request ordination of married men as priests to help meet pastoral needs. FutureChurch delivered signatures from more than thirteen hundred concerned individuals to the leaders of the USCCB prior to their 2014 fall assembly.

In 2015 several bishops, archbishops, and cardinals have agreed to meet with Catholics in their dioceses to discuss the needs of the people and how new leadership models might bridge the gap between ought and is. Some meetings have already taken place and others are in the planning stages. Keeping this discussion alive this spring, FutureChurch, as part of an international gathering of priest and lay organizations, signed on to an Open Letter to Pope Francis calling for him to “open the priestly office to everyone who has the charism.”

Check out futurechurch.org for up-to-date information on these efforts and the outcomes of bishop meetings.

FutureChurch has materials available to assist those interested in pursuing these meetings with their local bishops. The goal of these meetings is to discuss the potential assistance married priests, women deacons, and lay leaders could offer to the U.S. Church.

Help us to promote awareness of this issue. If you see an article about optional celibacy we invite you to tweet it to us (@futurechurchusa) or share it with us on facebook: #optionalcelibacy

Leadership Conference of Women Religious by Sr. Christine Schenk

The mid-April resolution of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s (CDF) mandate against the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is a second win-win for U.S. sisters and for Pope Francis who concluded the Apostolic Visitation Report in a similarly positive manner last December. It seems the Vatican finally realized some leading U.S. prelates had given them gravely misleading reports about U.S. nuns.

On the positive side, contemporary religious life has been affirmed at last, not only by the thousands of ordinary Catholics who came to their defense, but also by the Vatican itself. Consider this excerpt from the Apostolic Visitation Report:

“In a spirit of creative fidelity to their charisms, [the sisters] branched out in new ministries to those most on the margins of the Church and society. Women religious in the United States also notably pursued ongoing theological and professional formation seeking to further their ability to serve the Church’s evangelizing mission and to prepare others to collaborate in it as well.

It is no small thing to have official approbation after many years of distrust and criticism for thinking outside the box.

It is unlikely that the outcomes for U.S. sisters would have been nearly so positive without the unprecedented outpouring of support, love and concern by thousands of grassroots Catholics.

Without them, I doubt that U.S. sisters would have been able to help the Vatican understand what it means to be a Christ-believer in our 21st century society.

FutureChurch extends profound gratitude to all those Catholics and other justice-minded people who prayed, signed petitions, sponsored public vigils and prayer services, and wrote to church leaders for the sisters. Here are some highlights from what is probably the largest grassroots advocacy effort in the history of the U.S. Church:

April 18, 2012  The CDF issued a mandate to overhaul LCWR, an umbrella group representing over eighty percent of U.S. sisters. Church renewal advocates, including FutureChurch, immediately launched a change.org petition that over the next four months garnered 64,364 signatures.

April 20, 2012  Thirteen national and international Catholic reform organizations joined in coalition and created the Nun Justice Project, to organize ongoing advocacy for U.S. sisters. FutureChurch’s Sr. Chris Schenk facilitated the steering committee.

May 8, 2012  Created by FutureChurch’s webweaver, the Nun Justice website launched with prayer, vigil and petition downloads and invited financial redirection for Peter’s Pence contributions to communities of local sisters. (At the time investigative journalist, Jason Berry, reported that Peter’s Pence donations were frequently used to cover Vatican operating costs rather than the Pope’s private charities.)

May 29, 2012  On the eve of the spring meeting of LCWR leadership and throughout the summer, hundreds of public prayer
vigils were held across the U.S. and internationally. Cleveland’s FutureChurch celebration at St. Colman parish attracted 650 people and was covered by the New York Times.

**June 13, 2012** Representatives of the Nun Justice Project from the Women’s Ordination Conference and Call To Action delivered 57,000 signatures supporting the sisters at the Atlanta meeting of the U.S. bishops’ conference.

**June 18, 2012** Network, a Catholic Social Justice Lobby singled out in the LCWR sanction, launched a cross-country bus tour -- Nuns on the Bus -- to call attention to the justice work of Catholic sisters to protest U.S. Representative Paul Ryan’s budget cuts to programs for the poor.

**July 18, 2012** 998 people pledged to donate $88,350 to local religious orders from redirected Peter’s Pence funds. By the summer of 2013, 1,246 people pledged $106,298 to support local religious communities. Seventy-five percent said they diverted their donation from Peter’s Pence contributions.

**August 2012** Jennifer Reyes Lay from the St. Louis Catholic Action Network for Social Justice extended a heart felt welcome to LCWR members by organizing opening and closing prayer events.

**August 2-18, 2012** Public vigils in over 40 “sister-cities” supported LCWR leaders meeting in St. Louis and taped video footage for YouTube.

**April – August 2013** After Pope Francis reaffirmed the CDF action against LCWR, over 500 people downloaded resources and sent online or paper communications to church officials. Monthly vigils continued in a number of cities.

**May 29, 2013 - November 4, 2014** Three separate Nuns on the Bus tours advocated for comprehensive immigration reform, Medicaid Expansion and strong voter turn out in the mid-term elections to encourage a living wage and a budget that benefits all.

**May 15, 2014** Seventeen progressive Catholic organizations issued an open letter asking Pope Francis to personally intervene after CDF chief Cardinal Gerhard Müller publicly criticized LCWR leadership and Dr. Elizabeth Johnson CSJ, one of the most beloved and respected theologians in the world. Nearly 17,500 signatures were delivered to the Vatican and others promised to send Spanish language versions of Dr. Johnson’s books Consider Jesus, and Quest for the Living God to Pope Francis.


**April 16, 2015** CDF and LCWR issued a joint statement announcing the lifting of sanctions. LCWR leaders meet with Pope Francis for nearly an hour. This is history making since it is the first time since U.S. sister leaders were ever granted an audience despite frequent requests over the years. The Nun Justice Project issued media release: Catholic Groups Praise U.S. sister-Leaders in Resolution of Unjust Vatican Mandate.

Over the past three years Catholics everywhere helped attract extraordinary media attention ranging from local TV footage to national Associated Press coverage. Interviews on Public Radio’s The Diane Rehm Show, Comedy Central’s The Colbert Report and CBS’s 60 Minutes all made a difference.

Aside from grassroots support, the international peace movement, Pax Christi, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and six individual religious orders of priests and brothers passed resolutions supporting LCWR. During the Apostolic Visitation, the Union of International Superiors’ General issued a public statement supporting U.S. sisters, and the United States Congress quickly attracted 174 cosponsors for a resolution honoring Catholic sisters.

Along the way, an outstanding Solidarity with Sisters website assiduously tracked all media stories and provided resources, programming and commentary about the LCWR debacle.

For me, the past three years have been a roller coaster of highs and lows. Every time I saw a poster or bumper sticker proclaiming “We are all nuns,” it made me weep. As I saw it, the outcome of this struggle would be a watershed for the future of our church.

Would we become a place that honored women’s voices, due process and dialogue in managing difference? Or would the institution I both love and hate at times, continue to devalue women’s voices, sticking firmly to a “my way or the highway,” mentality?

Thanks to Archbishop Sartain — who wins high marks for his ability to listen — and to LCWR sister leaders — whose dogged commitment to contemplation and dialogue ultimately triumphed over Vatican politics — sanity prevailed.

And creative justice-minded Catholics? Well, you “made a way where there was no way.”

Because, you see, “we are all nuns.”
From the Program Desk

A Farewell to Liz England and a Welcome to Russell Petrus

It is a poignant moment at FutureChurch as we say good-bye to our talented and gifted program coordinator, Liz England and welcome our new program director, Russell Petrus.

Liz England has decided to step away from the work of FutureChurch to be with her three beautiful children on a full time basis. We are grateful to Liz for all the energy, creativity and enthusiasm she brought to FutureChurch and wish her the best as she moves into a new phase of her life. Make sure to read Liz’s farewell words on page 9 in this newsletter.

It is with great joy that we announce the arrival of our new Program Director, Russell Petrus. Russ comes to FutureChurch with over ten years of experience in ministry. A Cleveland native, Russ moved to Cambridge, MA to pursue a Master of Divinity at Weston Jesuit School of Theology — now a part of Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry. While at Weston, Russ focused his studies in the areas of sacramental theology and the history of liturgy. After graduation, he continued to work in parish ministry in Boston for several years before returning to Cleveland in 2011. Most recently Russ has been working in a suburban Cleveland parish working with youth, coordinating adult education, and leading the RCIA process.

Through the years, Russ has been committed to developing innovative parish-based programs that educate, promote dialogue, and encourage participation in the life and intellectual tradition of the Church. His A Catholic Church for the Third Millennium series brought parishioners into conversation with theologians, journalists, and spiritual leaders to discuss the vital issues that will shape the Church at the beginning of the third millennium. Shortly after the election of Pope Francis, Russ presented a six-week The Francis Factor to examine the impact of the new pope’s pastoral style on the Church. The series also offered strategies for embracing and furthering Francis’ style of collaborative leadership at the local parish and diocesan levels.

In addition to his background in parish-based programming, Russ has written for the National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors, presented at a national conference for LGBTQ students at Jesuit Colleges and Universities, developed social media strategies, and produced web content.

“|I am more than thrilled to be joining the visionary and dynamic team at FutureChurch. I believe that Pope Francis’ leadership offers a unique opportunity for the Church to finally engage the issues that Catholics in the pews are concerned about — the same issues FutureChurch has been raising for the last 25 years. I am encouraged by this openness and I know that FutureChurch is poised to capitalize on this opportunity, to push the dialogue and debate forward in constructive ways, and to empower Catholics — female and male, young and old, lay and ordained — to find their voice and be a part of the conversation. I am honored to be a part of FutureChurch’s efforts and I pray that the Spirit will continue to inspire and guide our work in the exciting years to come.”

FutureChurch’s 19th year of St. Mary of Magdala Celebrations

This year’s Magdala Celebrations are already in the works for the July 22 feast day. St. Mary of Magdala was a witness to the pivotal event in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, his resurrection on Easter morning. In John 20 we read of her courage and Jesus commissioning her to deliver his message to the apostles.

Sadly, the story of Mary of Magdala is often misrepresented. Her role has been dismissed and her image abducted and abused over the centuries while her powerful witness has been forgotten or ignored. In this year’s prayer service we recall her strength in remaining with Jesus at his darkest hour, as he suffered, died, and was buried. This year especially, we are calling for that strength to help us as we accompany those who have been abducted and sold as commodities into modern day slavery.

The trafficking of people is a global crisis with far reaching effects on culture and societal norms. In countries as diverse as India, Taiwan, Nigeria, Honduras, and the United States, people are bought and sold in what seems like an endless supply chain. Some are put to work as domestic servants, used in the drug trade, as sex workers, and even as brides. These victims live in the dark corners of our world. Nancy Lawrence, in her song reflection (see our Mary of Magdala downloads online) reminds us that every 30 seconds another person is exploited and labels the situation “a holocaust of human dignity on a global scale.”

This summer we ask that organizers focus their celebrations on witnessing for the victims of trafficking. Materials are available for free download and include a call for a commitment from each participant to help put an end to human trafficking.

Over 200 celebrations were held in 2014 and we hope to build on that number this year and promote awareness of this global epidemic. Send in your celebration information or download materials at futurechurch.org.

See highlights from 2014 at celebratemarymagdala.org.
Liz England Says Farewell

After a spring filled with soul searching and struggling to make use of every moment of my day, I made the decision to resign as program coordinator at FutureChurch in order to dedicate my time to my family.

The past three years have been a joy for me both personally and professionally. The fun started in 2012 when my first event as a staff member was a prayer service in support of US Women Religious and included introducing myself to a church filled with more than 600 Cleveland Catholics. Talk about pressure and excitement. That day I knew FutureChurch was the place for me.

As program coordinator I interacted with many of you around our annual Magdala Celebrations, Priesthood Sunday, Catholic Tipping Point Tours, Support the Sisters Campaigns, and other programs that would take up this whole page. I truly enjoyed the kind, funny, and so often frustrated emails and letters I received. The wisdom offered freely from the members and supporters will stay with me, and perhaps make it to my three little humans.

While I step away from the office I also want to remind you all that the work continues. Organize your Magdala celebration now for her July 22 feast day- and be sure to send in your details so that it can be counted among the more than 200 held each summer. Meet with your bishop and let him know that we need to expand the leadership model in the US Church to meet the pastoral needs of the people of God. Find and promote women for the permanent diaconate. Invite a married priest to talk with your community. Join the effort to bring real families to the 2015 Synod in Rome at ourcatholicfamily.org. And, please, keep an eye on your email for new and expanded efforts that I do not even know about yet. This is an exciting time in the life of the Catholic Church.

Finally, I want to say thank you, thank you to each of you who lent your precious time to me and to this work. To each of you who served on a committee, helped with a petition, signed a postcard, mailed a letter, stood in support of visionary leaders, celebrated women and lay leadership, traveled in pilgrimage, and who held tight to the vision of the future church – I wish you joy and peace.

LIZ ENGLAND

New York Parishioners Defend Canonical Rights

Catholics from over 20 parishes in the Archdiocese of New York appealed a November 2nd announcement by Cardinal Timothy Dolan that he would merge 112 of the archdiocese’s 368 parishes. But the archdiocese essentially obstructed parishioners’ rights to appeal by refusing to make public the canonical decrees giving reasons for each merger. These documents are required for any appeal to the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy.

A barrage of letters and telephone calls finally led to a handful people being permitted to view their individual decrees, but only by appointment and only under the surveillance of diocesan personnel with no photographs or notes permitted. Because of the confusion and lack of access to the decrees, a number of parishioner appeals cases may well be denied since appeal letters must be sent within ten days of the decree date. It was only discovered in late December that decrees were dated November 2nd too late for some to appeal. But even so, no copies were permitted to anyone.

Finally, on February 11th, after many requests asking the Vatican to intervene, the archdiocese posted the decrees online. A spokesperson lamely explained to the New York Times that it had been an oversight and the archdiocese had meant to post the decrees all along. For many New York Catholics, his comments constituted a new low in credibility. The same Times story documented that while the archdiocese routinely touts the democratic nature of its Making All things New reconfiguration process, many final decisions contradicted recommendations from the parish committees.

FutureChurch cofounder, Sr. Chris Schenk has been working closely with canon lawyer Sr. Kate Kuenstler for over a year to support beleaguered New York parishioners, many of whom feel betrayed by their spiritual leadership. At this writing, a number of New York appeals have been accepted for review in Rome with decisions pending.

On May 8th Cardinal Dolan announced a second round of consolidations in which 37 more parishes will be merged to become 16 entities. A number of parishioners sought resources from the FutureChurch website and plan to appeal the merger decision. This time the decrees were posted online, thanks to all those courageous New Yorkers who fought for and succeeded in defending their canonical rights.
2014 - 2015 Synod on the Family Timeline

In October 2013, Pope Francis called for a 2-part synod examining the issues pertaining to family life. Almost immediately a number of bishops’ conferences (i.e., England and Wales), posted the preparatory questionnaire online asking all Catholics in their regions to participate. In the U.S., Catholics everywhere found ways to voice their concerns about the state of pastoral practice in the Church. Here is a timeline of events thus far.

**November 2013** Fifteen reform organizations including FutureChurch distributed a survey based on the questionnaire distributed by Rome. Over 16,500 people responded.

**February 2013** The data was analyzed by Dr. Peter J. Fagan, M.Div., PhD., from the Department of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and the “The Voices of the People” report was issued and sent to U.S. Bishops and Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri of the Synod of Bishops.

**December 2013 – October 2014** The “My Catholic Family” campaign asked Catholics to share pictures of themselves on the My Catholic Family website and their families as a way of holding up the beauty and diversity of all Catholic families.

**June 2014** The report (Instrumentum Laboris) summarizing the results of the preparatory questionnaire was released. The document held no surprises.

**June 2014** The USCCB announced their delegates to the 2014 Synod. They included Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, president of the USCCB, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, VP of the USCCB, Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles and Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia. Interestingly, Archbishop Blaise Cupich, chosen by Pope Francis to lead the Archdiocese of Chicago was given an “alternate” status.

**September 2014** Alice and Jeffrey Heinzen are chosen to speak (one time before the synod participants) and serve as auditors at the synod. Another couple chosen was not able to attend.

**October 5-19, 2014** The Extraordinary Synod on the Family FutureChurch goes to Rome to participate in an international press conference, to meet with synod delegates to share the “Voices of the People” report and to report on the daily activities. Throughout the synod, Pope Francis offered various warnings to those in leadership who stand by doctrine rather than mercy.

**October 13, 2014** The Mid-term document is released. It is good news embodying a more open and welcoming tone than anyone expected. As such, there is an immediate and stark reaction by traditionalists who underplay the significance of the document and pressure for a pull back.

**October 18, 2014** The Relatio Synodi (final document) is released. Although the document retains much of the mid-term language, all the welcoming language for LGBT Catholics is replaced with a repeat of the status quo. There is great disappointment among many Catholics and pain as a measure of hope is crushed.

**October 30, 2014** The Relatio Synodi is released in English.

**November 10, 2014** Nineteen Catholic reform organizations issue “A Call for a Year of Dialogue” with resources for writing local bishops to ask for dialogue and meetings on the issues that will be discussed (ourcatholicfamily.org).

**December 9, 2014** The Lineamenta is released in preparation for the 2015 Ordinary Synod. It is a combination of the Relatio Synodi and a set of complicated questions that seem more bent on reinforcing current teaching than opening dialogue.

**January 21, 2015** An open letter and petition is launched urging bishops to “Widen the Circle” of invitees to the 2015 Family Synod. Over 5,000 individuals and 38 national and international organizations representing tens of thousands of Catholics worldwide sign on.

**March 7, 2015** Signatures along with a list of twenty suggested experts is delivered by Deborah Rose-Milavec of FutureChurch to the Synod of Bishops in Rome. Msgr. John Abruzzese agrees the circle needs to include Catholics who are divorced and remarried. The list is also sent to the Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of the USCCB and all the bishops in the United States and Canada. Catholics in other countries also send the petition and their list of candidates to their bishops.

**January – March, 2015** Reform organizations including FutureChurch urge Catholics to engage in listening sessions using our resources along with a survey reporting tool. Fifty-one groups engage in listening sessions.

**April 10, 2015** Association of U.S. Catholic Priests send out survey report of priests entitled, “Priests offer voice of experience, ‘hope and joy,’ for Vatican Synod on families.” They recommend becoming a welcoming Church rather than rejecting/discriminating against divorced/remarried, gay/lesbian Catholics, revising canonical processes, respecting conscience, etc. They deliver their report to the Synod of Bishops in Rome. uscatholicpriests.org

**April 14, 2015** The Our Catholic Family Listening Session report is sent to all the U.S. bishops, the Papal Nuncio and Cardinal Baldisseri. National Catholic Reporter reports that more than half of all dioceses consulted their Catholic constituents this time for input on the Instrumentum Laboris.

**April 21, 2015** Reform organizations send out a press release calling attention to the listening session report where Catholics express their sense of solidarity saying, “Either all are in the center of the heart of God, or none of us are.”

**April – September 2015** Catholics are urged to meet with bishops who are synod delegates to discuss the Listening sessions report and the issues that will be discussed at the synod.

**May 23, 2015** Ireland, a Catholic country, becomes the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in a referendum. This is a significant and welcome milestone for the Catholic Church and will have repercussions at the synod.

**June 1, 2015** FutureChurch resends the reports to the bishops in time for the June meeting of the USCCB. The cover letter urges them to “widen the
Timeline, continued from page 10

circle” of invitees and consider the voices of Catholics who are rarely heard in their discussions.

June 2015  The USCCB meets and invites three couples, all traditionalists, to talk at the conference about marriage and family values.

June 2015  The Synod of Bishops will issue a document summarizing the input they received from bishops around the world in preparation for October’s meeting.

TBD  The U.S. Bishops will choose lay candidates who will serve as auditors and experts at the 2015 Family Synod.

TBD  A group of women theologians publish Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table, edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network (Paulist Press, 2015) in plenty of time for distribution to synod leaders. This is a first of its kind resource.

October 4 – 19, 2015  The meeting of the bishops for the 2015 Ordinary Synod on the Family. FutureChurch will again attend, participate in press conferences and attend the press briefings.

2015 Family Synod:
Catholics Speak UP

Ever since Pope Francis announced the 2-year synod process re-evaluating pastoral practices related to marriage and family life, Catholics have been eager to engage bishops and have their voices count. Over the past two years, thousands of Catholics completed diocesan and other surveys (like the one FutureChurch and fifteen other reform organizations offered in November 2013) in order to let leaders know where change is needed; reached out to their bishops to seek a year of dialogue in the lead up to the synod; urged leaders to widen the circle of invitees who will witness about family life at the synod; and engaged in listening sessions to hear one another as they discussed the often painful concerns Catholics face, especially in terms of the exclusionary practices of the Church.

Over and over Catholics are saying that the Church needs to move from its doctrinaire mentality and return to the virtues of mercy, forgiveness and respect for the primacy of conscience. In short, the Church must become a more open and welcoming place.

One Catholic who participated in the listening sessions spoke eloquently of the solidarity many feel with Catholics who have been excluded saying, “Our emphasis on the sanctity of life should…include every moment of every journey of every human being, and our church should not define anyone as peripheral — either all are in the center of the heart of God, or none of us are.” See the full report at ourcatholicfamily.org/listening.

And while the U.S. Supreme Court decision on gay marriage will impact the deliberations in October, the May referendum in Ireland legalizing same-sex marriages will have even greater affect—a force that could be measured in the stark response of Cardinal Pietro Parolin who claimed the vote was a “defeat for humanity.”

In contrast, Tom Fox, editor for the National Catholic Reporter carved out another perspective saying the referendum vote is “a gift the Catholic hierarchy has been handed by the Irish with their overwhelming vote to legalize same sex marriages. Coming just months before the Synod on the Family set for next October in Rome, the vote by this Catholic nation is no less than a church plebiscite – a vote of the Catholic sensus fidelium for all to see that official Catholic teaching on human sexuality is wrong, hurtful, and even, at times, immoral.”

(http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/bishops-your-church-has-spoken)

In May, presidents of the bishops’ conferences of Germany, Switzerland and France — Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Bishop Markus Büchel and Archbishop Georges Pontier held a gathering with about fifty theologians, pastors and media people at the Pontifical Gregorian University seeking ways forward on pastoral reform. They spoke of the need to develop the Church’s teaching on human sexuality and called not for a theology of the body, as famously taught by St. John Paul II, but the development of a theology of love.

Many U.S. priests are calling for more welcoming, merciful pastoral practices. The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) reached out to priests with a survey that yielded some very hopeful responses. Priests said that on mercy the church will make progress:

• By grasping that people will understand the mercy of God when they experience the mercy of the Church
• By avoiding practices that make people feel judged, rejecting discrimination against divorced/remarried, gay/lesbian Catholics and opening the Eucharistic table to all believers
• By respecting conscience in resolving moral dilemmas
• By appreciating the value of gay civil unions, by challenging the notion that God wills only the man/woman model and by providing a new, healthy theology of sexuality based on fruitfulness

In April, they delivered their report to the Synod of Bishops in Rome. To read the report, go to uscatholicpriests.org.

Finally, Catholic women will have a say. In a new book, Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table, edited by the Catholic Women Speak Network (Paulist Press, 2015) respected Catholic theologians such as Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, Lisa Sowel Cahill, Sr. Margaret Farley, Professor Tina Beattie and others speak about marriage and divorce, contraception, same-sex love and much more. This is a first-of-its-kind resource with both stories and feminist theological reflection that will be distributed to synod leaders. FutureChurch is offering it during our Pentecost campaign (futurechurch.org).

Catholics worldwide are speaking up and their faith-filled dissent is challenging the rigid, doctrinaire positions taken by many of their bishops. In bigger and bigger numbers, the People of God are saying that on the issues of same-sex relationships, divorce and remarriage, human sexuality, contraception and other issues, the only Church that can truly survive and lead in the world is a welcoming Church where love, respect, justice and mercy are the foundation.
On April 28 I was privileged to attend Toronto’s Hot Docs film festival for the international premier of Radical Grace, a documentary about three U.S. sisters traversing the tribulations of the Vatican’s “inquisition.” I am one of three sisters enlisted by the dedicated documentary partnership, InterChange Productions and the Kindling Group. Two other sisters featured are Simone Campbell, a Sister of Social Service and the late Jean Hughes, an Adrian Dominican.

Simone is an attorney and the executive director of Network, a Catholic Social Justice lobby that spearheaded U.S. sisters’ support for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) even though U.S. bishops had opposed it. After the ACA passed Congress, (thanks in no small part to the sisters) the Vatican began a doctrinal investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, an umbrella group representing 80 percent of U.S. nuns. Network was publicly chastised. Angry that U.S. sisters had disagreed with them, a few bishops apparently sought retaliation via church politics.

“Out of 217 submissions, Radical Grace ranked in the top five for audience choice award.”

Radical Grace follows Simone’s inspired decision to leverage the sisters’ newfound notoriety by launching “Nuns on the Bus”—a cross-country bus tour that highlighted sisters’ work with the marginalized and Congressman Paul Ryan’s shameful budgetary cuts on programs for the poor. Dramatic footage captures Simone’s interaction with angry demonstrators carrying signs telling her that she would “burn in hell.” Yet we also savor a historic victory. As the bus trundles along a bucolic Midwestern highway, word comes that the ACA has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Simone’s excitement and profound gratitude — and that of her Network sisters — is beautiful to behold.

Sr. Jean Hughes’ lifelong love for the poor, whether in the developing world or inner city Chicago, culminates at St. Leonard’s Ministries, a residential program for formerly incarcerated women and men, where she ministered for seventeen years until her death last January. Some of the film’s most humorous moments come from Jean. In a picnic-table conversation with rough and tumble ex-cons (who clearly love her) Jean suggests they find a good woman who will be a true friend and not just a romantic interest: “If she need diamonds, drop her,” she says to rueful male laughter.

Kate McElwee and Erin Hanna of the Women’s Ordination Conference are prominently featured for their skilled leadership and creative activism. One scene shows pink smoke wafting over St. Peter’s basilica just prior to the 2013 conclave. While international TV cameras roll, Erin and Kate join about a dozen participants from all over the world in intoning Ubi Caritas and requesting open discussion of women’s ordination.

As for me, it was a hugely serendipitous (read Holy Spirit) blessing that our March 2013 pilgrimage to sites of women officeholders in the early church coincided with the election of Pope Francis. Filmmaker Rebecca Parrish and sound specialist, Shuling Yong, accompanied us to catacombs and excavated ancient cities. They filmed my tears of gratitude on the fateful white smoke evening that brought us a blessedly pastoral pope. The movie also documents the timely and wildly effective advocacy of the Nun Justice Project (see related article, page...) and assorted FutureChurch speaking events about women in the church.

As it turns out I needn’t have brooded about how my wrinkles and generous curves would look on the big screen. No one cared. People loved the film and told us they hadn’t expected it to be funny as well as uplifting. Out of 217 submissions, Radical Grace was ranked in the top five for the audience choice award. A lively interactive session following each screening gave filmmaker Rebecca Parrish and me the opportunity to encourage people to get involved in whatever justice issue pulls on their heart-strings.
A longtime advocate for women’s ordination, Beattie suggested that if ordination is ruled out and “we are asked to accept that and respect it, we have to see that in every single other situation there is full and equal promotion of women’s leadership in the Church, that every single position that does not require ordination is equally filled by men and women.” But mostly, she longed for a day when honesty and authenticity would be a foundational value in the Church so that when we face struggles, we won’t “find that because we’re threatening some kind of unreal ideal, we have to keep silent.”

Ulla Gudmundson admitted that in her role as ambassador to the Holy See from 2008 through 2013, she was struck by the absence of women there, especially in high-level positions. She also noticed that when clerics spoke about women, they described them collectively as “tender, patient, sensitive, motherly, empathetic and gentle,” descriptors that Gudmundson felt shortchanged a much broader set of qualities that belong to women.

Gudmundson dreamed of a church that gave “freedom to both women and men to realize their full human potential….”

Drawing laughter and applause, she quipped, “I would like to see women have the opportunity to be strong, courageous, intelligent, to exercise all these qualities.

And I would also like to see men have the opportunity to be tender, patient, sensitive, etc.” She drew even louder laughter and applause when she added, “I think Pope Francis is a shining example of ‘feminine genius’: patient, tender, emphasizing mercy and love.”

Astrid Lobo-Gajiwala acknowledged that her experience with the Church was often frustrating, especially when she sees women excluded from decision making “because all kind of governance is linked with ordination.” She pointed to the absurdities of women professors teaching homiletics but not being able to preach the homily, or of women going through the diaconate training program along with their husbands without the same opportunity to be ordained.

Yet, in some arenas, Gajiwala found a great deal of satisfaction. In 2008, the bishops of India asked her to help craft a gender policy for the entire Catholic Church of India. Along with Sr. Lily Francis and others, they wrote a draft that was later approved by the bishops. “I really felt respected,” noting the significance of the process. “They trusted the women to articulate their own vision. They gave us the freedom…and then they owned this document.”

Gajiwala’s dream statements read like those articulated by Martin Luther King Jr.

I dream of a church where it won’t matter whether you’re a man or a woman, and you just respond to the call to service irrespective of whether you’re a man or a woman.

I dream of a church which moves from power over, which is, I think, very characteristic of clericalism, to power with and power for, which is so characteristic of servanthood.

I dream of a church where men and women would participate equally in all decision making so that they both will contribute to the policies, structures, the teachings, and the practice of the church. And both will engage in ministry.

I would love a church where we were conscious and use inclusive language in our translations, in our liturgies, in our documents...And when I speak of language, I would also love to see a church where God is liberated from male constructs. Women experience God so differently and I wish there were a place for this to expand our understanding of the mystery of God.

I dream of a church where women can give the homily like Kerry [Robinson] did this morning...and where we can hear more stories of women in the lectionary.

Since I come from the Indian church, I dream that our gender policy will not remain a dead letter but will be a read letter and will be implemented.

Astrid, Gudrun, Ulla and Tina all have a dream — a dream that just a few years ago could not have been articulated inside the Vatican. And even though they find Pope Francis’s inclination to idealize women rather than engaging them on equal terms discouraging, they are expecting positive change for women in the church and they know it is coming.

Update: Since our meeting in Rome, there has been great progress getting women’s voices heard more prominently at the 2015 Family Synod. A new resource, Catholic Women Speak: Bringing Our Gifts to the Table will be published by Paulist Press soon and distributed to all the synod leaders. It contains essays and stories about divorce and remarriage, same sex relationships, contraception, and a host of other issues written by Catholic women from around the world. Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Sr. Margaret Farley, Professor Tina Beattie and others share their wisdom and insights just in time for the synod. FutureChurch offers this resource as part of our Pentecost campaign.

http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs189/1101674625527/archive/1120672589512.html
**Parish Appeals Roundup**

**Judge orders end to eleven year parish vigil**
Parishioners at St. Francis Xavier Cabrini Church in Scituate, Massachusetts, have been ordered by a Superior Court judge to end their eleven-year round-the-clock vigil at the church by 5:00 pm on Friday June 5. St. Francis Xavier Cabrini Church is the last of eight parishes that began vigils in 2004 after Cardinal Sean O’Malley closed or merged more than 60 parishes in the Boston archdiocese, in part to pay for clergy sex abuse bills. All parishes eventually appealed to the Vatican but were denied. Maryellen Rogers, a spokeswoman for the vigil, said the group plans to appeal the judge’s order. (Boston Globe 5-29-15) https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/05/31/scituate-parishioners-vow-keep-legal-fight-save-catholic-church/igtsimn7WeHqN5gkyXOrl/story.html

**Philadelphia St. Laurentius parish threatened, appeal in limbo**
Catholics at St. Laurentius parish have been fighting for two years to preserve their historic Polish parish in Fishtown, a neighborhood in Philadelphia. In March 2014 the archdiocese closed the church citing safety concerns, and recently announced plans to demolish it. But the “Friends of St. Laurentius” filed an appeal to the Vatican and then hired their own engineering firm. While engineers confirmed significant safety issues, they also proposed alternative solutions that could significantly reduce the $3.5 million price tag the Archdiocese had estimated for repairs. According to archdiocesan spokesperson, Kenneth Gavin, the Vatican denied the St. Laurentius appeal, but the “Friends” group says they have yet to receive a formal reply from the Vatican. Parishioner John Wisniewski told the PhillyVoice, “In terms of what the church means to this area and thousands of people, the church must be maintained, We will chain ourselves to the church if we have to.” (Philly Voice, 5/5/2015) http://www.phillyvoice.com/fate-fishtown-church-spurs-holy-war-of-words/

**Fourteen Philadelphia parishes win reprieve**
Fourteen parishes under review for possible merger or closing by the archdiocese of Philadelphia will stay open. In Montgomery County six parishes -- Holy Martyrs in Oreland, St. Alphonsus in Marlpe Glen, St. Catherine of Siena in Horsham, St. Genevieve in Flourtown and St. Anthony of Padua and St. Joseph, both in Ambler, -- have all been deemed “financially and pastorally viable and should remain free-standing.” In Springfield County, three parishes -- St. Kevin, Holy Cross, and St. Francis of Assisi -- will remain open and free standing but must develop collaborative models of operation. In the city of Philadelphia five parishes -- Mother of Divine Providence, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady Help of Christians, St. Adalbert and St. George -- will remain independent while developing collaboration plans. (Delaware County Times 5/3/15) http://www.delcotimes.com/general-news/20150503/springfields-catholic-churches-get-reprieve-x2014-for-now

**Vatican high court apparently denies two appeals in Springfield diocese**
Catholics at Mater Dolorosa parish in Holyoke, Massachusetts and St Mary of the Assumption Church in Northampton have apparently lost their appeals at the Vatican’s Apostolic Signatura. Both parishes had been merged and parishioners were to worship at other church sites. In a May 6 news story Victor Anop, chair of the group Friends of Mater Dolorosa, said they had not received notice that their appeal was lost, but in any case they would not give up. “There are other appeals that the group had planned regarding a negative outcome, including, but limited to an appeal to the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts at the Vatican,” Anop said in a statement sent to the local television station, 22News. http://wwlp.com/2015/05/06/mater-dolorosa-appeal-rejected-advocate-calls-church-closing-ethnic-cleansing/

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**Yes! I want to JOIN and DONATE to support the work of FutureChurch**

Donate $125 or more and you will receive Catholic Women Speak: *Bringing Our Gifts to the Table.* Published by Paulist Press, this exciting resource speaks from the perspective of women in the Church and will be distributed to synod leaders. It features the writings and reflections of renowned Catholic women theologians (Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, Sr. Margaret Farley, etc.), ministers, activists and others on key issues relating to the 2015 Family Synod. This will be a treasured resource as we approach the final phase of the synod process.

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Looking for Lydia in Greece

More than thirty pilgrims will find their way to Greece from October 8 – 17, 2015, to search for clues about the lives and roles of early Christian women in that region. They won’t be alone though. World-renowned scholar, Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, will share her decades-long research to help all travelers know the women of our salvation history: Lydia, Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche and others.

This trip is filled, but stay tuned for more FutureChurch pilgrimages in the future.

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Restore the Women of Advent Resource Packet $15
Learn and pray with the women and men of Advent – Learn about and pray with with the female prophets of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, a possible woman in the Magi, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the martyrs of El Salvador, Joseph the just man and more.

You will love this packet with all the educational and prayer resources along with clear guides on how to use them.

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From the new Mary of Nazareth Project

Our Lady of Guadalupe Resource and Prayer Guide
This exciting resource is currently being developed by some of the most learned Marian scholars in the world. It contains educational resources, prayer resources and even poetry. Learn about the history of theology of Our Lady of Guadalupe, one who liberates and stands in solidarity with the poor and outcast. In our introductory essay, we explore the historical Mary of Nazareth and the many ways cultures have defined her – those that empower and those that present a passive model of womanhood. Join us as the Eurocentric blue-eyed, light skinned Mary that came to prominence in one period of our church history steps down from her white pedestal to live more fully among us as a leader, friend and prophet in our salvation history.

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Focus on FutureChurch

FutureChurch Calendar of Events

**July 22, 2015**
*Mary of Magdala: A Model Witness to the Victims of Human Trafficking*
Cleveland, Ohio (and worldwide)
St. Mary of Magdala celebrations in Cleveland (7pm at River’s Edge) and around the country. Go to FutureChurch.org to learn more and download free materials.

**July 25, 2015**
*What Francis Needs to Know*
Chicago, Illinois
Panel Discussion: *Always at the Center, but Never at the Front? The Role of Women in the Church* with Gina Messina-Dyert and David Myers moderated by Deborah Rose-Milavec.

**August 11 – 13, 2015**
*Houston, Texas*
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

**August 26, 2015, 11:00am ET**
*Creating a Roadmap for Gender Equality in the Catholic Church.*
Teleconference with Dr. Astrid Lobo-Gajiwala of India

**September 15, 2015, 8pm ET**
*Will the Real Mary Please Stand Up? Understanding Mary of Nazareth in our Salvation History.*
Teleconference with Sr. Elizabeth Johnson

**September 18-19, 2015**
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*
Women’s Ordination Worldwide

**FutureChurch presentation:**
_Complementarity: A New Name for an Old Tool_

**September 20, 2015**
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*
Church 4 All prayer service in preparation for Pope Francis’s visit. Sponsored by organizations from Catholic Organizations for Renewal.

**October 2, 2015, 7pm**
**October 4, 2015, 1:30pm**
*Cleveland, Ohio*
Radical Grace screening with Co-Founder, Sr. Chris Schenk. Cleveland Institute of Art Cinematheque, Tickets $12, $15
http://www.cia.edu/cinematheque

**October 4 – 25, 2015**
*Rome, Italy*
2015 Ordinary Synod on the Family FutureChurch goes to Rome to continue advocacy, education efforts at the synod.

**October 8 – 17, 2015**
*Greece Pilgrimage*
FutureChurch leads its fifth pilgrimage, this time to Greece, following in the footsteps of early Christian women leaders. Dr. Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ will be our Educational Director.

**November 6-8, 2015**
*FutureChurch to the Call to Action Meeting*

**November 12, 2015**
6:30pm – 8:30pm
*The Church: Presence and Possibility*
FutureChurch celebrates 25 years With Keynote speaker Fr. Michael Crosby and honoring Sr. Chris Schenk and FutureChurch’s 25 years of working for reform.

**November 13, 2015, (Time TBA)**
*New York City*
*Our Catholic Church: What Will I Tell My Daughter and Should She Stay?* 25th Anniversary Lecture by Natalia Imperatori-Lee, Director of Catholic Studies Program at Manhattan College

**December 2, 2015, (Time TBA)**
*Fairfield, Connecticut*
The Future of Ministry 25th Anniversary Lecture by Paul Lakeland. Paul Lakeland is FutureChurch’s 2015 Trivison Award Winner

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