Twenty-five years ago, on October 16, 1990, more than thirty Catholics from sixteen parishes across the diocese of Cleveland gathered in the basement of St. Malachi parish. Their concern: the evaporating numbers of priests and the implications for the sacramental life of the Church.

In the 1980s, the U.S. Bishops had commissioned a study by Dr. Richard Schoenherr at the University of Wisconsin to map the future in terms of active priests. The bishops wanted to understand the full impact of fewer priests entering the seminaries and ongoing attrition rates due to retirements, deaths and departures for various reasons – including the desire to marry. But when the bishops saw the emerging picture, they tried to bury the study by defunding it.

But there were Catholics who had shovels.

Richard Schoenherr stood undeterred. He found alternative sources of funding to continue his work and finally published it in 1993 in Full Pews, Empty Altars.

Others, determined not only to uncover this valuable data, but to flesh out its implications for the Church’s sacramental life and ministry committed themselves to educating others about these critical trends.

Catholics in the Cleveland diocese were at the forefront of these efforts. From the Church of the Resurrection, the Community of St. Malachi, St. Mark parish and more, Catholics went to work. Fr. Louis Trivison, Sr. Chris Schenk, Mary Englert, Kay Vine, Gen McCloskey, Joanne Callahan, Tom Ribar, Maureen Dowd, Joe Grace and many more formed committees and began to educate themselves and other Catholics about the impending priest shortage while recommending solutions that would help ease that shortage and advance Vatican II concepts of Church.

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The U.S. Bishops in a Francis World

Reading the latest iteration of the U.S. Bishops’ “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” is akin to swallowing a bitter pill. It just hurts — all the way down.

The document, first developed in 2007 and re-issued on November 17, 2015, at the annual USCCB meeting, overwhelms the reader with language that breathes “fire and brimstone” rather than trusted, compelling guidance.

During his September visit to the United States, Pope Francis told U.S. bishops to reject “harsh and divisive language” and to reach out to the world, especially those in need. The bishops, he said, should embrace an approach “which attracts men and women through the attractive light and warmth of love” (Religious News Service, 23 Sept 15).

In that way, a few courageous bishops stand out. Even though the document passed by an overwhelming majority (210-21), for the first time, several bishops voiced strong opposition from the floor. Bishops Robert McElroy, Gerald Kicanus and John Stowe urged that the document be thrown out. They called for a new document that would better incorporate the priorities of Pope Francis, especially those that focus on ending global poverty and the environment.

Bishop McElroy faulted the document for keeping “the structure of the worldview of 2007,” and called it, “gravely hobbled.”

In an interview with America magazine, Bishop McElroy also said that applying the language “intrinsically evil” to the redefinition of marriage was technically incorrect, but more importantly, “pastorally alienating…injurious to gay men and women…and injurious to the Millennial generation” (http://americamagazine.org/issue/updated-faithful-citizenship-challenged-usccb-meeting).

Because of the pastoral leadership of Pope Francis, the pain of having this document thrust upon us again is even more acute. Our hearts have been softened with hope over the past two years. Fragile still, we carry that hope with us when the bishops meet. We pray they have been listening. We look for signs that they have been converted — softened by the spirit of compassion swirling anew in the Church. We long for leadership that does not rely on harsh and divisive language, but attracts men and women through love.

We were made for just that kind of Church, just that kind of love. So are our brother bishops.


DEB ROSE-MILAVEC
FutureChurch at 25 Years continued from page 1

Those pioneering Catholics formed the core of FutureChurch. Working in partnership with Call To Action, FutureChurch organized the “Future of Priestly Ministry” campaign and visited 60 parishes in five years to awaken others to the shortage while offering strategies for talking with their bishops and working for change.

Pioneering Catholics have always been at the center of this work formulating and driving much needed reforms within the Church we love. FutureChurch’s work has continued to expand and evolve. Driven by our early mission and vision, dozens of programs and actions have been developed under four core initiatives: Future of Priestly Ministry, Women in Church Leadership, Save Our Parish Community and Justice in the Church. With a strong Board of Trustees, a talented and committed staff and a tenacious and engaged group of volunteers and members, FutureChurch will continue to work locally, nationally and now, more than ever, internationally to strengthen our collective voice for change and to build a strong vibrant church for this generation and the next. The Spirit of God that compelled Fr. Louis Trivison, Sr. Chris Schenk and so many other Catholics to lead the Church forward is still beckoning—calling us to listen deeply, love unreservedly, and to carry out the work of the Gospel with courage and joy!

The Church: Presence and Possibility

FutureChurch celebrates a quarter century with Sr. Theresa Kane, Fr. Michael Crosby and Sr. Chris Schenk and more

Over 170 people filled the room on November 12, 2015 to celebrate the history and the ongoing work of FutureChurch. The evening was packed with spectacular speakers. Fr. Michael Crosby gave the keynote address and Sr. Theresa Kane offered a special tribute to Sr. Chris Schenk. The evening ended with a thought-provoking panel discussion about the gifts and future of the Church with “A Founder (Sr. Chris Schenk), a Gen Xer (Natalie Kertes Weaver) and a Millennial (Russ Petrus).”

Sr. Theresa Kane offers a tribute to Sr. Chris Schenk
Sr. Theresa Kane congratulated FutureChurch on its Silver Anniversary and described Sr. Chris Schenk as a “singular catalyst…whose beauty is both interior and exterior”, one who has served as “a source of inspiration to me and to others.”

Sr. Chris Schenk responded to the tribute by asking “what would you expect when we stand on the shoulders of giants?” Sr. Chris recounted the many times when friends and colleagues encouraged her, the times when Fr. Louis Trivison called when she was feeling low, or Ann Dowdell wrote encouraging notes or Sr. Theresa Kane called to check on her. Sr. Chris also announced that Fortress Press will publish her first book researching the lives of early Christian women leaders from the archaeological evidence. She also told the audience that she has been asked by Sr. Theresa Kane to write her memoirs.

Fr. Michael Crosby talks about a Trinitarian Church
In the keynote address, Fr. Michael Crosby contrasted the worldview of New York Times columnist Ross Douthat who described Pope Francis as a “chief plotter” at odds with “historic faith” (nyti.ms/1JLw9Jt) with a vision of Trinity—a community where there is room for all.

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Fr. Crosby agreed that FutureChurch’s great gift was its focus on Eucharistic communities. According to Crosby, people have a right to the Eucharist and to be part of a Eucharistic community. The focus should not be on priesthood but on the continuation of religious Eucharistic communities. He applauded FutureChurch’s work for focusing on the question of “Who is going to commune? Who is going to get to the table?”

In describing the real presence of God, Fr. Crosby said, “I believe God is a community that is called Trinity. In this community everyone is equal to everyone. Everyone is sharing everything with everyone. There is no deprivation. There is no domination. There is no discrimination.”

Fleshing out that concept, he said, “The dream of a community is where there is no discrimination, no domination, and no deprivation. The Church is to be a sign of that. So when you have women discriminated against, when you have lay people dominated, when you have certain people defined in ways that they are going to be deprived of the Eucharist, how is this Trinitarian? How does this reflect the reign of God?”

**A Founder, A Gen Xer and a Millennial talk about the future of the Church**

The evening concluded with a cross-generational panel discussion on the future of the Church moderated by board member Mary Louise Hartman.

Chris Schenk, the founder, described the many gifts of the Church and the Holy Spirit that have allowed us to remain a community of love. She expressed concern that we have largely lost many of the younger generations in the Church.

Representing the Gen X generation, Natalie Kertes Weaver, Chair of Religious Studies at Ursuline College, described her generation as one “disinclined to make absolute assertions about anything” and “the first generation to be media-ized.” A generation exposed to wide ranging media messages, Dr. Weaver recognized their ongoing “hermeneutic of suspicion” and ability to live with ambiguity as a gift. “We are the Church,” said Dr. Weaver. “We are already here,” and, beyond essentialism and ideology, we need to develop an understanding of personhood that is rooted in biological science. Ministry must flow from the science of the human person. Then the questions of “who can be in...

“...I believe God is a community that is called Trinity. In this community everyone is equal to everyone...”

and who can be out would dissolve....”

Russ Petrus spoke for the Millennial generation. While admitting his generation is abandoning religion in record numbers, he contends that there is something deeper going on.

“Are we the least religious generation ever?” asked Petrus. “Yes. But does that mean we have rejected Gospel values, that we have forgotten the teachings of Jesus or are morally relativistic? No. We just are not sure that the Church and so called Christians haven’t [rejected Gospel values].”

“If there is one thing about the Millennials the Church needs to know is we are all about authenticity,” said Petrus.

“I think we like Jesus a lot…We like the Jesus who is the social radical, who was very interested in inclusion, equality and social justice. We have great respect for this Jesus who was so willing to stand up for those values…that he was even willing to die.” Yet, younger Catholics, “don’t always experience the Church as having been rooted in that Jesus,” he observed.

The rub? “Our Church, our youth ministers and our pastors were asking, ‘What would Jesus do?’ while excluding our girl classmates from being altar servers; while telling our older sisters, our mothers, our aunts that they couldn’t be priests; while telling our gay classmates that they were disordered. [What would Jesus do?] We answered ‘Not that.’”

Echoing an observation that Mahatma Gandhi once made about Christians, Russ contended, “We take Jesus very seriously. And if the Church, the institutional Church wants to engage us, they need to they need to be worthy of the name Christian.”

After 25 years, Catholics who carry out the work of reform in the Church can be sure of two things. 1.) We stand on the shoulders of giants in faith, and 2.) the Church is in good hands going forward.
Dr. Paul Lakeland, ‘Apostle to the Laity’, receives the 2015 Trivison Award

On December 2, 2015, during an evening ceremony at Fairfield University, Dr. Paul Lakeland received the 2015 Trivison Award. He also generously presented a lecture on “The Future of Ministry” in honor of FutureChurch’s 25th anniversary.

Executive director Deborah Rose-Milavec presented the award, which is given in memory of Fr. Louis Trivison, a founding member of FutureChurch. In presenting the award, Rose-Milavec honored Dr. Lakeland as, “one of the most important theological voices for lay dignity and human rights in the Church.” Calling him an “apostle to the laity”, she spoke of his lifelong achievement, “bearing the Good News of the full giftedness of baptism and calling the institutional church to fully empower lay Catholics in church leadership, ministry and governance.”

In his lecture, Dr. Lakeland showed how ministry has changed over time arguing that it should flow from the single principle of what “will best serve the proclamation of the gospel?”

Demonstrating the dramatic need for a re-visioning of ministry, Lakeland suggested the Holy Spirit is speaking to us in:

• the dramatic decline in the numbers of men offering themselves for priestly ministry.  
• the extraordinary changes that have come about in understanding of women’s roles in leadership, the significant numbers of women studying theology and the number interested in ordained ministry.  
• the growth of the “nones,” those with no religious preference, many who are former Catholics no longer being spiritually nourished in the Church.  
• the changed understanding of the relationships between embodiment, sexuality and marriage that have placed married life on a par with celibacy as a path to holiness.

What will ministry look like in the future?

For Lakeland it includes:

• the abandonment of mandatory celibacy.  
• the ordination of women.  
• the necessity of part-time priestly ministry and the formation of team ministries that will include preachers, administrators, liturgy experts and spiritual directors who will, in turn, preside at the Eucharist.  
• the end of restrictions based on gender, sexual orientation, marital status or other inessentials.

Dr. Lakeland’s lecture will be available for viewing on the Fairfield University website. FutureChurch will post the link as soon as it becomes available.

Radical Grace Delights Audiences in Cleveland, Embarks on Social Impact Campaign

Near capacity crowds filled the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Morley Lecture Hall for two screenings of the new documentary Radical Grace on Friday October 2nd and Sunday October 4th.

Radical Grace director, Rebecca Parrish, followed three nuns for four years as they worked to reform both our society and the Church, despite actions from the Vatican that threatened to silence them and suppress their missions. The result is a brilliant film which beautifully captures the faith, bravery, compassion, sense of humor, and tenacity that so many of us have come to love and admire about women religious.

FutureChurch co-founder, Sr. Christine Schenk, one of the film’s three subjects, delighted audiences during the post-film question and answer session that raised a myriad of topics: what it was like to have a camera crew following her for years, the important role FutureChurch members played in helping the nuns through the Vatican oversight, the potential for women’s leadership in the Church under Pope Francis, and the evidence that women held leadership positions in the early Church.

Inspired by the sisters’ story, the Radical Grace team has embarked on a national social impact campaign that is helping reframe faith and morality as a force for progressive change in the world. Collaborating with feminist and faith-based social justice organizations, the Radical Grace team is leveraging the film to support reform within religious institutions and bridge divides to build a stronger progressive and feminist movement. The campaign has brought Radical Grace to cities throughout the country including Charlotte, Chicago, Denver, and Milwaukee.

To learn more about the film, find a screening near you, or host a screening visit www.radicalgracefilm.com.
As the Ordinary Synod on the Family came to a close, the Bishop of Rome along with a strong contingent of allies are working to untie a few knots.

Shifting to a new format for the synod -- small groups -- Pope Francis separated the power brokers, contained their influence, and got people talking at a deeper level than in previous synods. That made a difference even if the final document fell short on many counts.

In many of the thirteen language groups, bishops listened and learned, something the Pope encouraged during his remarks at the 50th anniversary celebration of the establishment of the synod. The stories they heard changed them making room for new conversations about how to be pastoral. Some bishops called for discarding destructive terms like "intrinsically disordered" recognizing that "words are worlds."

Interventions by auditors Sr. Maureen Kelleher, Sharron Cole and Sr. Carmen Sammutt, as well as voting members like Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher and Archabbot Jeremias Schroder raised awareness about violence against women, the need for gender equality in the Church and in society, and, surprisingly, the need for women deacons.

Canadian Archbishop Durocher, in his three-minute intervention, urged bishops to consider new roles for women, including women deacons. His full remarks are available at http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/canadian-archbishops-full-remarks-synod-women-deacons.

FutureChurch responded quickly by launching an online petition supporting Durocher’s effort. FutureChurch also reached out to individual members at the synod asking them to support his efforts on the synod floor. The petition garnered over 8300 signatures in just a few days. Deborah Rose-Milavec, who was covering the synod for FutureChurch, met with Archbishop Durocher in Rome to express gratitude, talk about future strategies and to deliver the signatures. In turn, Archbishop Durocher expressed his willingness to continue to bring these issues forward in his own conference.

The efforts of the auditors, Archbishop Durocher, and others found their way, in part, into the final relatio, which stated that the church should show, “greater recognition of their [women] responsibility in the church: their participation in decision-making processes, their participation in the governance of some institutions, their involvement in the formation of ordained ministers.”

The German contingent of bishops wielded strong influence because they approached the issues with theological sophistication and were able to come to a consensus on divisive issues despite the wildly differing positions of Cardinals Walter Kasper and Gerhard Mueller. In the end they offered a pathway to the sacraments for divorced and remarried Catholics and a firm position on gender equality. And while the final document did not explicitly open the doors to Communion for divorced and remarried Catholics, it opened the way for an internal forum recognizing that each case is unique and must be engaged as such.

Disappointing most Catholics, the final document left most of the necessary discussions about LGBT Catholics for another day, repeated the language of dignity, reaffirmed the Church’s opposition to marriage equality, but also included the language of accompaniment so that “all may learn to take off his sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (cf. Ex. 3:5), a powerful exhortation to put away destructive old judgments.

While the final relatio did not sort out all the thorny questions, it did make a start.

The process itself is nothing short of revolutionary in the staid environment of synodal worlds where bishops historically rubber-stamp papal pronouncements.

What the document could not adequately capture was the transformative power of a Francis synod. Hearts were changed. Bishops and Cardinals vowed to go back to their dioceses and listen with more openness to the People of God. They promised to listen rather than judge. Cardinal Donald Wuerl said it best: “No longer is the framework of the church’s pastoral response the code of canon law” (America, 24 Oct 15).

Francis has set the Catholic Church on a new path toward synodality, an organizing principle that needs to include full participation of the laity as well. This is a time of change and moving forward.


Catholics find hope as the Synod on the Family comes to a close
### Synod on the Family: Quick Facts

- **Pope Francis appoints Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri**: Sept 2013
- **Pope Francis calls synod**: Oct 8, 2013
- **Preparatory document released w/38 question survey**: Nov 2013
- **Evangeli Gaudium released**: Nov 2013
- **Cardinal Walter Kasper addresses cardinals**: Feb 2014
- **Working document (Instrumentum Laboris)**: June 2014
- **Pope Francis appoints commission to study annulments**: Sept 2014
- **Extraordinary Synod opens**: Oct 5, 2014
- **Midterm document**: Oct 13, 2014
- **Extraordinary Synod closes - Final relatio**: Oct 19, 2014
- **Preparatory document for 2015 Ordinary Synod**: December 2014
- **Pope Francis announces Year of Mercy**: April 11, 2015
- **Working document (Instrumentum Laboris)**: June 2015
- **Pope Francis issues indulgences-Year of Mercy**: Sept 1, 2015
- **Pope Francis issues motu proprio on annulments**: Sept 8, 2015
- **Ordinary Synod opens**: Oct 4, 2015
- **Pope Francis exhortation at 50th anniversary of Synod**: Oct 17, 2015
- **Ordinary Synod closes - Final relatio**: Oct 24, 2015
- **Synod commission elected (12 of 15)**: Oct 24, 2015
- **Pope closing remarks**: Oct 25, 2015
- **Pope issues Apostolic Exhortation**: TBD
- **Year of Mercy begins**: Dec 8, 2015
- **English translation of final document released**: Dec 13, 2015
- **Year of Mercy ends**: Nov 20, 2016

### Statistics

- **Number of members on the drafting committee**: 10
- **Number of voting members**: 270
- **Number of interventions**: 328
- **Number of fraternal delegates**: 14
- **Number of auditors**: 51
  - (17 couples, 17 singles)
- **Number of women**: 30
- **Number of small language groups**: 13
  - (4 – English, 3 – French, 2 – Spanish, 3 – Italian, 1 – German)
- **Number of paragraphs in final document**: 94
- **Most contentious paragraphs**: #84 (72/187), #85 (80/178), #86 (64/190)
- **Final vote on overall document**: 177 of 265 voted to approve

### Timeline

- **Teleconference Series Continues**

The FutureChurch teleconference series is a resource for Catholics hungry to learn more about their faith in action.

In August 2015, Astrid Lobo Gajiwala talked about her work drafting the Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India. When it was released in 2010, the Bishops of India instituted a model for raising awareness and bringing women into more equitable roles in society and in the Church. Astrid commented that the policy was unusual because the bishops asked women to draft it with their full support. To learn more about the Gender Policy of the Catholic Church of India go to: [http://cbci.in/downloadmat/gender_policy.pdf](http://cbci.in/downloadmat/gender_policy.pdf)

In September, Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ helped FutureChurch launch the Mary of Nazareth Project with a presentation about Mary, the Mother of Jesus entitled “Will the Real Mary Please Stand Up?” Referring first to her historical roots, Dr. Johnson traced the history and power of the image and role of Mary for the Church today.

In the spring FutureChurch is planning a number of teleconferences on women deacons with both experts in the field and women who feel called to the diaconate. We will also be organizing a cross-generational panel discussion to talk about the future of the Church. Stay tuned.

You can listen to the podcasts by going to our website: [futurechurch.org/podcasts](http://futurechurch.org/podcasts).

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FutureChurch Harnesses the Power of Social Media to Broaden its Reach

According to the internet giant Google, nearly 60% of people talk more online than they do in person. That staggering statistic is a clear indicator of how much the internet and digital technology have changed the way people access, consume, and engage with information and each other since FutureChurch was founded 25 years ago.

While FutureChurch continues to root itself in the efforts of parish-based Catholics, there is no denying the enormous potential that the internet offers for the work of Church reform and renewal, particularly when it comes to disseminating information and educating Catholics worldwide.

Like FutureChurch’s website, futurechurch.org, where Catholics from around the globe can view and download FutureChurch resources for use with their communities, social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have the potential to expand and strengthen FutureChurch’s reach and impact.

Perhaps the most popular way to expand one’s reach and impact on social media these days, is the “hashtag”—formerly known as simply the number or pound sign (#) on your touchscreen phone.

A hashtag labels or categorizes posts by theme, current event, or interest. Using hashtags allows FutureChurch to connect with and engage individuals who are interested in or talking about the same issues, themes, or events. For instance, when FutureChurch was Tweeting (posting to Twitter) during the Synod on the Family in Rome, it used the hashtag #Synod15 which was being used by millions of others to report on, follow and talk about the Synod. If people were looking for posts about the Synod, they likely discovered some of FutureChurch’s posts regardless of their prior knowledge of or affiliation with FutureChurch or its mission. In other words, FutureChurch was a part of the online conversation being held around the world by Catholics of all stripes, including many of the bishops who were also Tweeting from Rome.

Harnessing this potential, FutureChurch launched two hashtag campaigns this summer aimed at engaging Catholics in two major projects: educating Catholics about the priest shortage and telling the true story of Mary of Magdala.

The hashtag #OpenOrdination campaign launched in response to the latest figures from The Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, which showed the continuing trend of closing parishes in response to the critical shortage of priests in the United States. Using the #OpenOrdination hashtag, FutureChurch and its friends and followers were able to educate people online not only about the priest shortage and parish closing but about the need for optional celibacy, women deacons, and alternatives to closing parishes as well.

The #OpenOrdination campaign brought 700 new signers to FutureChurch’s 2014 Open Letter to the United States Council of Catholic Bishops — nearly doubling the previous number of signatures on the letter. The letter calls for an open discussion of the priest shortage, parish closings, women deacons, and optional celibacy for priests at their general assemblies with a view to presenting concrete suggestions for opening ordination to Pope Francis.

The #ReclaimMagdala campaign launched shortly before the July 22 feast day of Mary of Magdala. While the campaign was used to Celebrate Mary of Magdala and to promote Mary of Magdala celebrations throughout the world, it also provided a means to respond to the Prayer for Mercy, which had been composed for the Jubilee Year of Mercy and perpetuates the historically inaccurate portrayal of Mary of Magdala as a prostitute and public sinner.

Through the #ReclaimMagdala campaign, FutureChurch and its friends and followers drove social media users to its online petition which challenged the inaccuracy of the Prayer for Mercy and called for a public correction from the Vatican on Mary of Magdala. 1,500 people signed the petition, which was hand delivered during the Synod on the Family to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the body charged with overseeing the Year of Mercy.

As the priest shortage continues to loom and gifted and called individuals are turned away from ordained ministry, FutureChurch remains committed to educating and engaging Catholic—lay and ordained, in the pews and online, at the parish and institutional levels — on the critical challenges and opportunities confronting the People of God. As we celebrate 25th Anniversary of FutureChurch, the use of social media is just example of how FutureChurch is celebrating the past and looking forward to the future.

RUSS PETRUS
Updated Priesthood Sunday Celebrations

Over 60 Priesthood Sunday Celebrations were held on or around this year’s Priesthood Sunday on October 25th, including 8 international celebrations in Canada, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

The celebrations came shortly after the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University released new numbers revealing the devastating consequences of the priest shortage in the US. According to CARA, the total number of diocesan priests in the United States dropped from 27,182 in 2010 to 25,868 in 2015—a reduction of 1,314. The percentage of priests available for active also ministry dropped from 68 percent to 66 percent in the same span of time. In 2015 just over 17,000 diocesan priests were available for active ministry. This data reinforces the validity of the prediction that CARA made in 2009 that nearly half of all currently active priests would retire by 2019.

Perhaps even more troubling, however, is how these numbers play out in the lives of everyday Catholics. Despite a growing Catholic population, the priest shortage has prompted the closing of more than 620 parishes in just the last five years, displacing hundreds of thousands of Catholics.

Since 2010, Priesthood Sunday has provided the opportunity for FutureChurch members and supporters to educate others about the priest shortage crisis in their community and to advocate for married priests and women deacons as ways to mitigate the crisis. The new organizing kit for Priesthood Sunday 2015 offered resources on optional celibacy and women deacons including a completely updated “Brief History of Celibacy in the Catholic Church.” This history includes statements by Pope Francis and bishops around the world; a brand new “10 Reasons to Allow Married Priesthood” with the latest polling data and news of developments in the Church, along with a revised version of “7 Reasons to Restore Women Deacons.”

On February 24, 2015, The National Catholic Reporter published research conducted by Jack Ruhl, professor of accountancy at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. The evidence indicates that 74 percent of diocesan pension plans for priests are severely underfunded. If these plans were subject to the Department of Labor requirements for most pension plans, diocesan pension program would have to adapt immediate strategies and plans to improve and rehabilitate their funding.

Along with resources addressing the priest shortage, optional celibacy and women deacons, the 2015 Priesthood Sunday Celebrations included several new resources on priestly retirement and an interactive spreadsheet with all of the data collected by Jack Ruhl, a suggested letter to bishops on behalf of retired priests, a prayer service for retiring priests, a prayer for retired priests, and a litany for retiring priests.

Go to futurechurch.org to learn more.

FutureChurch Welcomes Luke Hansen, S.J.

FutureChurch is pleased to welcome Luke Hansen, S.J., onto our team as an intern for our Women Deacons project. Luke is a Master of Divinity student at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, on track towards ordination in the Society of Jesus. Luke is working with FutureChurch as a part of his field education.

When asked why he was interested in working with FutureChurch, Luke reflects, “I admire FutureChurch’s consistent witness over 25 years. It is an organization full of people who love the church and want the church to better serve its mission. Supporters of FutureChurch are deeply rooted, spiritually, and have always valued parish life and dialogue with church leaders.”

Luke hopes to make the most of this field education working for the ordination of women deacons. “Women are already serving in some diaconal roles, but the church is unnecessarily denying them the grace of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Pope Benedict and Pope Francis have called for greater roles for women in the ministry of the church. To ordain women as deacons would make this call real.”

Opening ordination to women deacons is a deeply personal cause for Luke, who notes, “I have met women who are drawn to these ministries and have experienced a call from God and their community to serve as deacons. We need them. There is no legitimate reason to exclude them.”

Luke reflects that through his experience in a number of different ministries, “I have begun to understand -- as a man, a member of a religious order, and a candidate for priesthood -- how much privilege I have in the church, and I have experienced God calling me to become more involved in the renewal of the Catholic Church.”

Luke’s work will include the development of new resources exploring the history, theology and opportunities for women discerning a call to the permanent diaconate.

We are happy to welcome Luke and we pray for God’s blessings on his time with FutureChurch and beyond!
Catholics from over 25 parishes in the Archdiocese of New York appealed November 2nd 2014 and May 2015 announcements by Cardinal Timothy Dolan that would merge 149 of the archdiocese’s 368 parishes. Sadly, the archdiocese initially 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.

A barrage of letters and telephone calls finally led to a handful of people being permitted to view their individual decrees last December 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, many appeals were denied since appeal letters must be sent within ten days of the date the decree was issued. It was only discovered in late December that decrees were dated November 2nd too late for many to appeal.

Finally, on February 11th 2015, after numerous 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 intended to post the decrees all along. For many New York Catholics, these 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 Emerita, Sr. Chris Schenk volunteers as a liaison working closely with canon lawyer Sr. Kate Kuenstler to support beleaguered New York parishioners, who understandably feel betrayed by their episcopal leadership. At this writing, at least 15 New York appeals have been accepted for review in Rome. Four were denied at least in part because of confusion caused by the Archdiocese’s failure to provide the decrees. Vatican officials recently notified appealing parishioners that their cases have been extended until November 2015.

In addition to the New York Archdiocese, FutureChurch has provided support and free resources to parishioners across the U.S. and around the world over the past year.

Celebrating Mary of Magdala takes on renewed purpose as Pope Francis calls for a more incisive role for women in the Church. By remembering Mary of Magdala as the Apostle to the Apostles and trusted leader in the early Christian community, we can uncover and restore the Church’s earliest tradition of male and female leadership, modeled on the inclusive practice of Jesus.

FutureChurch’s Magdala Project, now in its 19th year, continues to inspire organizers and participants worldwide to tell the true story of Mary of Magdala. More than 200 organizers held celebrations this summer to honor the July 22nd Feast of St. Mary of Magdala. 29 celebrations were held outside of the United States in Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Uganda.

At home in Cleveland, FutureChurch was honored to host Sisters Rosemary Powers and Josie Chroniak, both Sisters of the Humility of Mary, at our July 22nd Mary of Magdala Celebration. The theme for the evening’s prayer was “Being a Witness for the Victims of Human Trafficking.”

Through their work with the Collaborative Initiative to End Human Trafficking, Sisters Rosemary and Josie are shedding light on what they call “a hidden problem.”

Their message was all the more poignant within the context of our touching Mary of Magdala prayer service which paired the first-person accounts of victims of human trafficking with John’s complete account of the exchange between Mary of Magdala and Jesus at the tomb on Easter morning.

Listening to the stories of victims and to the story of the Resurrection, one couldn’t help but draw parallels between the victims of modern day trafficking and the long tradition of “trafficking” Mary of Magdala’s false reputation as a prostitute or public sinner.

Neither Mary of Magdala nor the victims of human trafficking are able to speak for themselves. It is up to us to be witnesses for them, to tell their stories, to pull them out of the shadows cast by those who would use them for their own purposes and bring them into the light.
Celebrating Mary of Magdela, continued from page 10

of freedom to be who and what God has called them to be.

FutureChurch calls on Pope Francis to Correct the Record on Mary of Magdala, for Mercy’s Sake!

In March of this year, Pope Francis announced a Jubilee Year of Mercy, calling on the entire Church to take up one of his papacy’s central themes. The jubilee year began on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2015 and will close on the feast of Christ the King, November 20, 2016.

In May, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization—the body charged with organizing the details of the Year of Mercy—released the “Prayer for Mercy” written especially for the Holy Year. While much of the prayer is beautifully written, it falls short by perpetuating the historically inaccurate portrayal of Mary of Magdala as a prostitute and public sinner by pairing her with the “adulteress.”

In response, FutureChurch launched a petition in July calling for a public correction on Mary of Magdala, saying that “the portrayal of Mary of Magdala as a repentant prostitute has overshadowed her true role in the early Church and has contributed to the marginalization of women in the Church throughout the centuries and even to this day.”

The petition went on to state that correcting the record on Mary of Magdala “would provide a good historical and biblical starting point to discuss the role of women in the Church today”—a discussion that Pope Francis has called for numerous times.

In just three months, 1,500 people joined the call by signing onto the petition. In October, while in Rome for the Synod on the Family, FutureChurch Intern, Luke Hansen S.J. and Executive Director, Deborah Rose-Milavec, hand delivered the petition and the signatures to the office of Archbishop Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

FutureChurch concurrently released a new resource, #ReclaimMagdala, which compiled existing Mary of Magdala educational resources and projects such as the Gospel Restoration Project and Mary of Magdala Feast Day Celebrations into one convenient package. The resource also gives practical suggestions for telling the true story of Mary of Magdala online and in social media using the hashtag #ReclaimMagdala. The resource was a big hit with audiences at the 2015 Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in Houston, the 2015 Women’s Ordination Worldwide Conference in Chicago and other venues.

Mary of Nazareth Reimagined: Uncovering the riches of Mary’s life and tradition for Catholics today.

As much as any figure in our salvation history, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, has had a mixed reputation. On the one hand, she has been portrayed through a patriarchal tradition as a docile woman whose main duty in life was to obey all male authority. On the other hand, she has been understood as a liberator in her own right—a woman close to God who spoke prophetically about God’s dream for the world.

In FutureChurch’s newest project, Reimagining Mary of Nazareth, we offer educational resources tracing Mary’s historical development from Jewish maiden to queen of the universe. The project, which will include a number of resource packets over the next two years, uncovers the sources that shaped Mary’s history and explores empowering aspects within our tradition for Catholics today.

Resource Packet # 1:
Reinterpreting Our Lady of Guadalupe

In the first installment of this project, we provide a detailed study of the symbolism of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Contributor Dr. Jeannette Rodrigues shows how the symbol of Guadalupe is a liberating and empowering catalyst for all women.

Highlights of the Mary of Nazareth:
Our Lady of Guadalupe Resource

Educational Resources on Mary from the Early Church to Modern Day by Mary Christine Athans

Educational Resources on the Symbolism of Our Lady of Guadalupe by Jeanette Rodriguez

Reflections on Images and Readings Related to Our Lady of Guadalupe by Judith Davis.

Prayer Service in Honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe by Christine Schenk, CSJ

FutureChurch Resource

Re-imagining MARY
Understanding the Role of Mary the Mother of Jesus in Salvation History and Today

Order resources at ReclaimMagdala
FutureChurch pilgrims in Greece follow in the footsteps of Lydia, Phoebe and other women of the early church

Thirty one women and three men from four countries traveled to Greece with FutureChurch’s Deborah Rose-Milavec and world-renowned scholar Sr. Carolyn Osiek to explore the sacred ground where Christian women walked, worked and witnessed the message of the Gospel. They also walked the paths where women sought solace and protection from the goddesses they knew best, such as Athena, Artemis, Persephone and Afaea.

Luke’s Acts of Apostles and the letters of Paul came alive as the group arrived at the place where St. Paul first landed — the Port of Kavala near Philippi where he disembarked.

In Philippi they visited the place where Lydia and her household met Paul and Silas and were baptized (Acts 16:11-15). Many felt inspired as they stepped foot on sacred ground. The prayer service honored Lydia and the women who lead in the church today. They also visited the prison where Paul escaped after an earthquake.

In Thessaloniki, the group visited the Church of St. Demetrius where beautiful icons of women saints and martyrs filled the walls. Irene, Olympias, Annysia, Chione, Agape, Holy Wisdom and her three daughters, Faith, Hope and Love felt like old friends to many as they moved from icon to icon with the chanting of the Sunday liturgy falling sweetly in the background.

The controversies stirred by Paul and Silas in Thessaloniki that led to their expulsion took on new life as pilgrims traveled to Bereoa where the Jews were more sympathetic to Paul’s preaching. There we visited a place where he is said to have preached at the oldest synagogue.

In Corinth, pilgrims visited the area where Paul first met Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3) and took up the trade of tent making with them.

At the seaport of Cenchreae where Phoebe the deacon lived (Rom 16:1-2) the group walked on the sacred ground where she once walked, considered her witness and her work as well as her charge as a deacon in carrying Paul’s letter to Rome.

Pilgrims visited the shop of a priest and his family who painted original icons, the Parthenon in Athens and the monasteries high on top of rock cliffs in Meteora.

On the island of Aegina at the Temple of Afaea pilgrims stopped and held a beautiful prayer service—the culmination of all the group had come to learn about the women who walked and lived lives of faith long before. From Lydia to Phoebe, Aquila to Chione, Agape to Athena, Irene to Iris—all came together to honor all that is holy and sacred. The prayer service written by Sr. Chris Schenk honored the God beyond all names.

The group sung a hymn by Bernadette Farrell the summed up the movement of hearts during the journey together to the sites of ancient women leaders and worshipers in early Christianity and beyond.

God, beyond our dreams, you have stirred in us a memory,
you have placed your powerful spirit in the hearts of humankind.

God, beyond all names, you have made us in your image,
we are like you, we reflect you, we are woman, we are man.

Book Reviews

Master of Ceremonies
written by Donald Cozzens. Chicago, IL: Extenso Press, 2014

Fr. Donald Cozzens’ first book, The Changing Face of the Priesthood, foreshadowed many of the challenging issues facing the Catholic Church in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Now, in his first novel, Master of Ceremonies (MC), Cozzens, writer in residence at John Carroll University, weaves these issues into a compelling story of one man’s revenge for clerical indiscretion.

When Fr. Bryn Martin was appointed Master of Ceremonies to Wilfred Gunnison, Archbishop of Baltimore,
he never envisioned the web of intrigue and secrecy that this relationship would one day draw him into. In 2005 Martin is named auxiliary bishop to the current bishop, Charles Cullen, just as Gunnison is anticipating the celebration of his 50th Anniversary of ordination.

Sergeant Mark Anderlee returns from a tour of duty in Iraq in 2005 where, during a quiet night on patrol in Tikkrit, he recalled a disturbing incident with his parish priest. Now back in Baltimore he is hell bent on retribution. With his determination driving the story, he brings out the worst in a band of characters connected to the diocese including its chancellor/financial vicar, the retired Archbishop Gunnison and “M”, a clandestine contact at the Vatican, all of whom are members of the Brotherhood of the Sacred Purple, seeking to save the Church from its Vatican II liberals.

The relationships that come to light both within the diocesan leadership and those with an interest in the well-being of the diocese from the outside create a network of secrecy and suspicion that questions the integrity of the institution. As the assault on the retired archbishop moves towards its climax, the intervention of a woman devoted through years of service to the diocese and a close friend with CIA experience sacrifice their security and good names to expose the truth. This is a saga that in style is akin to a blend of Dan Brown’s The DaVinci Code and James Patterson’s I, Alex Cross. Short chapters daring you to put the book down before you dissect the next episode.

A friend asked me after reading the book, “Is this all true? Do these things really happen in the church?” The intersection of events and motives portrayed in MC do not happen daily, but the shadow side of the church is always there in need of cleansing and reform.

Reviewed by Bill Plato

Did the representatives to the recent Synod on the Vocation and Mission of the Family hear the voices of women? Did they examine the life experiences of women and girls within the family? Did they hear about the many different kinds of families in the developed and vastly expanding developing world? If not, it could not have been for lack of opportunity—or access to the voices of women in North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the rest of the developing and ever-changing world.

Catholic Women Speak, Bringing Our Gifts to the Table emerged from a network of over 700 women from across continents who bring their insights, experiences, theological expertise, and vision to the attention of those who legislate about them, for them, and (theoretically) on their behalf. These are voices that must be heard: Anne Arabome, SSS from Nigeria, Lisa Sowle Cahill, past president of the Catholic Theological Society, Astrid Gajiwala, member of Asian and Indian theological associations and consultant for the Indian bishops, Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, distinguished professor of theology at Fordham University, Gabriela Zingarini,OP, professor of religious studies at the Northern University of St. Thomas in Buenos Aires, Tina Beattie, professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Roehampton in London and 38 other women from different countries, different cultural backgrounds, different perspectives.

Each essay in this unusual collection of voices and experiences brings to our understanding a vision that transcends one’s particular and more limited perspective. An insightful comment in the Foreword by Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, SJ notes: “Compiled with a view to the 2015 Synod on the Family, this anthology reminds us that treating half the members of the body of Christ as outsiders or assigning the second-class status is a detritus of history and tradition unsuited for the twenty-first century and unfounded in the gospel” (xiv).

The essays in this collection reflect on the disparate situations of women across worlds: same sex marriage and the Catholic community, maternal mortality and reproductive rights, women’s experience of celibacy, conscience and contraception, poverty and exclusion, and the inevitable—and necessary—consideration of “the role of women in the Church.”

A final essay by Catherine Cavanaugh summarizes the current dilemma. After reviewing current Church law pertinent to the lives of women (“Only men can be priests…; only men can read the Gospel at Mass and preach…the positions of greatest decision-making power in the Church are held by priests… in the parish someone is ‘Father’…” the author comments: “We may disagree on…answers. But let us agree at least, all of us, to wrestle with the questions” (p. 182). Catholic Women Speak raises one significant question that we can no longer ignore: “What does the Church teach us through its very structure about men, women, and families?” This anthology offers a forum for discussion that is both freeing and provocative.

All of the essays in the book are short, often condensed versions of longer and more detailed arguments that are referenced for further and more detailed study. The bibliography alone is valuable. These essays call for wide discussion and prayerful reflection on the roles of both women and men in the Body of Christ. Neither society nor the Church can survive without the presence and power of women or without the voices of those who continue their struggle to be heard. Catholic Women Speak is a powerful and confirming message for those who already know the struggle—and for those who need to be reminded of it.
Earlier this year, during a Lenten penitential service in St. Peter’s Basilica, Pope Francis said he has “thought often about how the church can make more evident its mission of being a witness of mercy” and announced a Holy Year of Mercy, to be celebrated from Dec. 8, 2015…until Nov. 20, 2016. “I am convinced that the whole church…will find in this jubilee the joy to rediscover and render fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time,” Francis continued.

To celebrate the Year of Mercy, FutureChurch is releasing a new subscription series of resources entitled “Women Witnesses of Mercy: Celebrating the Extraordinary Witness of Women During the Year of Mercy.” Each month’s release will feature a new woman and her witness to mercy. In addition to each woman’s inspiring story, there will also be articles with connections to the Works of Mercy and Catholic social teaching, resources for individual and communal prayer, questions for group conversation, and suggestions to help readers and participants become witnesses of mercy in their own community.

In addition to all of those great resources, FutureChurch has commissioned artist, Marcy Hall, to paint new icons for each of the women witnesses. Marcy Hall is a self-taught artist based in Erie, Pennsylvania, whose art is sold all over the world. Marcy recently worked with Abbey of the Arts—an online community offering opportunities to integrate contemplative spiritual practice and creative expression with monastic spirituality. Her series is entitled “Dancing Monk.” Her work is also featured in the 2016 “A Fire in their Hearts” calendar that includes quotations from Joan Chittister.

Attendees at the 2015 Call to Action Conference in Milwaukee were treated to a sneak preview of the Women Witnesses of Mercy resource at a prayer service hosted by FutureChurch. The response to the service was overwhelmingly positive and FutureChurch has fielded dozens of requests by attendees to celebrate the prayer service in their own communities. The prayer service incorporated a Litany to Women Witnesses of Mercy and an anointing, which were both developed as prayer resources for Women Witnesses of Mercy. Rhonda Miska, of the Catholic Women Speak Network, preached and offered her perspectives on mercy. Rhonda’s insightful and challenging homily—along with other reflections on mercy by women—will also be included in the resource.

This series will launch in December by remembering Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, and Jean Donovan who were martyred in El Salvador thirty-five years ago this year. It will conclude in November 2016 by highlighting FutureChurch co-founder, Sister Christine Schenk, whose tireless work to uncover evidence of women officeholders in the early Church has called attention to our foremothers in faith and advanced the cause of gender equality in the Church. Other witnesses include Helen Prejean, who works to end the death penalty in the United States; Antona Ebo, one of the “Selma Sisters” and civil rights pioneer; and Dorothy Stang, an advocate for the environment and the landless who was martyred in Brazil in 2005.

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

Donate $125 or more and you will receive Catholic Women Speak, an exciting resource currently being developed and published from the perspective of women in the Church in time for the 2015 Family Synod with our thanks. This remarkable resource will feature the writings and reflections of Catholic women theologians (Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, Sr. Margaret Farley, etc.), ministers, activists and others on key issues relating to the 2015 Family Synod. Published by Paulist Press, this will be a treasured resource as we approach the final phase of the synod process.

Become a monthly contributor at $15/month or more and receive A Church with Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium, edited by Richard Gaillardetz and Edward P. Hahnenberg.

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Ordain Catholic Women as Deacons

By Phyllis Zagano (Excerpted from Harvard Divinity Bulletin, SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015 (VOL. 43, NOS. 3 & 4)

Much of the World may be charmed by Pope Francis, but what has he done to include women as decision makers in the Catholic Church? More to the point, what can he do?

The Catholic Church teaches it cannot reverse Jesus’s decision to choose male apostles, predecessors to priests and bishops. Sacramental power and juridical authority come with priestly ordination and episcopal consecration. Barred from these, women can cooperate with but not share authority. Such is not necessarily the case. In order to fully hold (the canonical word is “obtain”) certain church offices, an individual must be a cleric, not a lay, or non-ordained, person. But priest and bishop are not the only clerical ranks in the church. Deacons are also ordained clerics, and history documents women ordained to the diaconate from the earliest centuries of Christianity to the Middle Ages, when the diaconate faded as a separate order. As priests absorbed the work of deacons, ordination to the diaconate became simply a step in the cursus honorum on the way to priesthood. Fewer and fewer women—mostly monastic abbesses—were ordained as deacons, primarily for service within their own convents.

However, the Catholic Church restored the diaconate as a permanent grade of order following the Second Vatican Council. Some bishops actually brought up the historical fact of women deacons during conciliar debate, but the promulgated documents clearly specify only men would be called to the order of deacon. When Pope Paul VI restored the diaconate as a permanent grade of order for the entire Church (it never fully disappeared in the Eastern Catholic Churches), he asked about women deacons, possibly of the Eastern Catholic Churches), he asked about women deacons, possibly of the Eastern Catholic Churches), he asked about women deacons, possibly of the

but at least of one of its more prominent members, Cipriano Vagaggini. By 1974, a journal of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome published Vagaggini’s densely reasoned historical and theological findings in Italian: yes, women had been ordained as deacons and could be so ordained again.

In 1976, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the curial office responsible for matters of faith and morals, published its opinion that women could not be ordained as priests with the document Inter Insigniores. The question of women deacons was specifically omitted.

Then, in 1994, Pope John Paul II issued a four-paragraph Apostolic Letter, Ordinatio Sacerdotalis affirming that the ban on women priests “pertains to the Church’s divine constitution” and that the Church’s determination that it did not have the authority to ordain women as priests “is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.” The statement raised several areas of concern, not the least of which was fueling opinions on whether it is “infallible.” Notably, the document does not mention women deacons.

If the ban on women priests is permanent and binding, then the restoration of women to the ordained diaconate becomes less complicated, specifically because the current practice of not ordaining women deacons is arguably a “merely ecclesiastical law”—a regulation, not a doctrine.

In 2002, the International Theological Commission, a body within the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, published a long-awaited study document on the diaconate. It appears that a subcommittee in the International Theological Commission’s 1992–97 session completed a seventeen- or eighteen-page positive document about women deacons that its then-president, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, refused to sign. Finally, in 2002, the ensuing International Theological Commission session approved a much longer and relatively inconclusive document, which stated that male and female deacons had different roles in the early church, that priesthood and the diaconate are separate and distinct ministries, and that the question of admitting women to the diaconate was something for the church’s “ministry of discernment” to decide.

The reconfigured subcommittee, chaired by one of Cardinal Ratzinger’s former Regensburg students, Henrique Noronha de Galvão, produced a second study that strangely misses much of the history about women deacons despite its thirty thousand words. Further, the study implies that the person ordained as deacon must image Christ, especially in uncited passages from and paraphrases of an earlier book by subcommittee member Gerhard L. Müller, who was named bishop of Regensburg just days after the document’s publication. Müller, appointed prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith seven months before Benedict XVI resigned and affirmed by Francis, is also editor of the “Opera Omnia,” the collected writings of Joseph Ratzinger.

While Francis may be interested in better situating women within Church governance and ministry, and even though there is sufficient theological evidence to readmit women to the order of deacon, significant curial roadblocks keep him from moving in the obvious direction. Women deacons could take up significant posts, at the Vatican and around the world. Women deacons could even become cardinals. But in 2008 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decreed ordination of women a crime worthy of automatic excommunication.

Francis calls priesthood’s connection to power and authority problematic. But if priesthood is the problem barring women from a “more incisive presence in the Church,” the diaconate is the solution.

Find the complete article with references at http://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/summerautumn2015/ordain-catholic-women-deacons
FutureChurch Calendar of Events

Women Witnesses of Mercy Series continues with new resources each month

March 8, 2016
“Is There Room for Women?” Voices of Faith event with panel discussion inside the Vatican

March 2016
Re-imagining Mary of Nazareth: The Feast of the Annunciation
New Resource available in early March

April 24 – 30, 2016
Upstate New York
What happened at the Synod on the Family? Upstate NY thruway tour

April and May 2016 (Dates TBD)
Women Deacons teleconference series

April 15, 2016
New York City
The Catholic Church: What Will I Tell My Daughter and Should She Stay?
FutureChurch 25th Anniversary event with Natalia Imperatori-Lee, Rutgers Church, NYC

Pope Francis stirs Catholics to action in the United States
In September 2015, Women’s Ordination Worldwide held an international conference in Philadelphia to raise up women’s voices and to draw attention to the ways that the Catholic Church under Pope Francis is still lagging in terms of gender equality. FutureChurch participated in the conference. Executive Director Deborah Rose-Milavec gave a workshop on “Complementarity: A New Name for a Bad Old Idea.” She presented the history of the concept, demonstrated how it made its way into the Catholic lexicon and what we need to do to educate Catholics about its pitfalls. To schedule a similar presentation in your local community write to debrose@futurechurch.org.

Church 4 All Coalition urges Church leaders to include all families at the World Meeting of Families
A coalition of Catholic reform organizations that included FutureChurch developed a website with prayer, educational and media resources in preparation for Pope Francis’s visit to the United States and the World Meeting of Families. Prior to the opening of the meeting, Catholics marched in Philadelphia, held a rally and prayer service and talked with media representatives about the need for more inclusion and representation of all families, including divorced and remarried Catholics, at the World meeting.

FutureChurch and International Priests urge Pope Francis to keep parishes open
Prior to Pope Francis’s visit, FutureChurch and six international Priest Associations, including the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, launched an open letter asking Pope Francis to urge U.S. Bishops to end parish closings and mergers and to find creative and pastoral ways to keep local parish communities alive. To learn more or sign the petition go to action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/pope-francis-help-us-build-the-church-by-keeping-our-parishes-open.

Go to www.futurechurch.org to learn more!

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