

# Subversive Habits Book Study

## Session One: Preface and Introduction

offered by FutureChurch

**Opening Song:** *Sanctuary/Prepare Me* by John Thompson and Randy Scruggs

(Lord,) prepare me to be a sanctuary  
Pure and holy, tried and true  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living  
Sanctuary for You

### **Small Group Questions:**

- Which parts of the readings or witness were most inspiring for you? Which parts surprised you? Which parts left you feeling sad or frustrated?
- Which Black Catholic woman religious inspired you? Why? How has your understanding or view of Black Catholic Women religious changed? In what ways do you see them as freedom fighters?
- When slavery ended, barriers to religious life for Black Catholic women began to fall away. Yet, a new level of white backlash emerged as Jim Crow segregation was imposed. How did you feel when you read (pp. 47, 48) that because of humiliations, mistreatment, segregation, white contempt and more, tens of thousands of Black Catholics left the church between 1865 and 1900? How does that exodus relate to our current time where a new study indicates Black Catholics are leaving in large numbers today?
- What could you and your parish/community do to take this educational and spiritual experience and make racial and reparative justice a greater reality? What would be some concrete ways the Catholic Church could offer reparations?

### **Large Group Chat Sharing Responses**

*Thank you, Future Church for this series and your ministry.*

*that the Church embody the power of the Eucharist - one people gathered, one body broken for the life of the world, one Spirit*

*I loved the opportunity to share my concerns.*

*What does Sr. Marcia recommend that we do to promote vocations among our young women?*

*I'd be interested in suggestions to help parishes face their unconscious racism and prejudices*

*I am so grateful for the Black women who persevered in white orders. We benefit from their tenacity.*

*I send up a little prayer for all the freedom fighters who are still fighting*

*Keep the faith.*

*As expressed in our group--that through learning the history our hearts are changed and we are motivated to live more justly*

*That we may truly embrace and celebrate diversity and difference among us.*

*May that wonderful spirit of perseverance and hope that our Black sisters so vividly demonstrated be alive in our hearts today.*

*For the sisters and all people who face discrimination, may we find peace and wholeness and Holy Perseverance*

*I am deeply grateful for Dr. Williams, the Oblates, and other communities of Black women religious who literally changed the path of Catholicism and brought the Gospel to so many of us who were blind.*

*Thank you interested in hearing stories of hope and where church has been a place of healing and transformation*

*I am heartened by the 125+ people here, knowing that together we can make a difference.*

*'Holy Perseverance' is a powerful statement and model. that we make it our own*

*Dr. Kim Harris is a Black theologian at LMU who has done work on Thea Bowman.*

*may we bring white supremacy to an end in our country, in our hearts and in all our social political, economic, medical and educational systems systems.*

*May the Lord give us a healthy dose of holy perseverance*

*Grateful for the information in the book. Armed now with the true truth. Ready to continue the fight.*

*Just Faith Ministries has a 9 month anti-racism study for parishes*

*I pray for courage to continue to learn, challenge and communicate to my Church about the sin of racism and to build a new Church of unity in diversity.*

*So grateful for the words of my group members and the challenge - it's not enough to know the story and the struggle of Black Catholics, what are we doing to speak out and working to change current practices and attitudes.*

*When will we as a Church deal with sexuality in a positive way and end sexual oppression?*

*FutureChurch is making a difference*

*Holy Perseverance...yes, it means learning what Black Catholic women faced.*

*Thank you for this opportunity to discuss this book and important topic*

*Thank you, Sr. Marcia Hall for your presentation and sharing your experience.*

*I wish more of us could share our answers to the last question—I am personally very interested in creative, concrete ways to repair the harm our Church has done.*

*This book should be required reading in every Parish.*

*thanks to Shannen for such an extraordinary "tome", historical documentation, and "holy perseverance" I am sure. Mary Rehmman CHM*

*Thank you to all past, present and future Black sisters and their families.*

*We could use a whole evening to explore action steps...and I hope we will....*

*What can we do to encourage that the US Council of Bishops are introduced to Dr Shannen Williams's book?*

*I'm humbled...and inspired*

*Our group truly encountered with each other and I gained insights through the sharing and reading thank you for this transformational church community*

*I pray that we may continue to grow in understanding of our history and in our present day continue to have these kind of dialogues. Black women religious I know do inspire me, especially Karen Bland, OSB! Thea Bowman and her invitation to "dance" calls to me too.*

*My hope and prayer is that Pope Francis will canonize the first six AFRICAN American CANDIDATES FROM THE US for sainthood. We at St. Ann have collected and sent him 3,000 letters so far. Please join our St. Ann Church group. vpcs@yahoo.com.*

*It is so encouraging to see us all come together to support Shannen, her work, learn history we never knew and the incredible perseverance of our Black sister religious in this country. Blown away!*

*We must continue to persevere in breaking down racism and sexism in our church.*

*Acknowledging racism and white privilege and lamenting my complicity leads me to prayerful action to show kindness to others and be sure to welcome people of color warmly in my life*

*To vowed women of African descent present here, I express my deep gratitude for your faithful service and witness. May there be healing for any trauma you have endured at the hands of the church in following your call.*

*Oh I love the Idea the USCCB read and be moved by the book*

*We have received a hidden treasure thru the reality never known. Let's spread this word of dedication love resilience and focus 🌸🌻👉*

*And I am struck by Sr. Marcia's experience of the racism that is present today. I am not surprised...yet so sad and tired of the hatred that never seems to completely die. Yet, because of holy perseverance, we too can change the present and the future.*

*The Holy Family Sisters had two women profess final vows yesterday and one woman make first vows. A wonderful, joyous celebration!*

*A big note of appreciation to all of you for caring about our past and our future.*

*Need for education, our churches to reflect diversity, the value of allies*

*A huge thank you, Marcia, for your witness and perseverance.*

*Yes, thank you so much Sr. Marcia!*

*Thank you, Future Church for enabling this sharing.*

*We must lament and grieve what has been done before we can move forward.*

*abundant blessing upon you and your congregation.*

*Thank you to all in our group who gave witness to their experiences.*

*Thank You Sr. Marcia and Dr. Williams*

*Thank you, Sister Marcia, for your presentation!*

*Thank you for the reflective music thank you*

*Thank you, Sr. Marcia, for sharing your story!*

*Thank you, Dr. Williams and all at Future Church for convening us tonight. Thank you Sr. Marcia*

*Thank you for this opportunity to share our stories about the struggles and victories of Black Catholics.*

*The Association of United States Catholic Priests (AUSCP) has an Anti-Racism Strategic Plan developed by some members to be used over three years in parishes or communities. More info can be gained from their website AUSCP*

*We should reject any history of Catholicism in the US that doesn't include African Americans until after the Civil War. Dr. Williams and others have shown that is not the case*

*Thank you, Sr. Marcia.*

*Remember ALL those persons who struggled to include black persons in our parishes, our schools, our religious institutions, and ALL black persons who put up with the abuse.*

*Thanks to everyone for another great night of meaningful conversation.*

*This upcoming Saturday night at 8pm EWTN will show documentary on African Americans on path to Sainthood.*

*Thank you all.*

*every time I experience a powerful FutureChurch event - another rich one follows!!  
Thank You!*

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God,

In our efforts to dismantle racism, we understand that we struggle not merely against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities – those institutions and systems that keep racism alive by perpetuating the lie that some members of the family are inferior and others superior.

Create in us a new mind and heart that will enable us to see our family in the faces of those divided by racial categories.

Give us the grace and strength to rid ourselves of racial stereotypes that oppress some of us while providing entitlements to others.

Help us to create a church and a nation that embraces the hopes and fears of oppressed people of color where we live, as well as those around the world.

Heal your family God, and make us one with you, in union with Jesus, and empowered by your Holy Spirit. AMEN

-Pax Christi