



## FutureChurch 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Event

# Fertile Ground: Building a Synodal Church



**Rafael Luciani**  
Keynote  
Presenter



**Sr. Maureen Sullivan**  
Louis. J. Trivison  
Award



**Yunuen Trujillo**  
Christine Schenk  
Award



The Dominican Sisters of Hope  
congratulate our sister and Theologian  
Maureen Sullivan, OP, Ph.D.  
as she receives the Louis Trivison Award.

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## From the Co-Directors **Deborah Rose & Russ Petrus**

Hello! And welcome to FutureChurch's 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Event!

First and foremost, thank you for all you have done to support FutureChurch over the years. Without you, FutureChurch and the work we do for Vatican II reform would not exist.

We extend a special welcome to our keynote presenter, Rafael Luciani, STD.; and our honorees, Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP and Yunuen Trujillo. We are honored that you have accepted our invitations to be a part of these evenings. Thank you for the work you do for the good of the Church and all God's people.

It is a hopeful time to be a Catholic as we witness the Spirit at work before our very eyes on this Synodal journey. The Spirit is revealing herself through the persistence and witness of faithful Catholics who continue to seek the promise of the Gospel and the vision of Vatican II. And it has our profound privilege and deep honor as Co-Directors of FutureChurch to help create spaces where the Spirit can speak to and through all of us throughout this journey.

We look forward to continuing along this path with all of you - discerning, dreaming, hoping - helping to bring about the changes needed to build a radically inclusive Church that is alive with the gifts, talents, and faith of all its members.

In gratitude & hope,

Deborah Rose

Russ Petrus

# Agenda

## Thursday

November 3, 2022 | Awards Ceremony

**Meet the Speaker Gathering  
Welcome & Opening Prayer**

**Offered by**

Russ Petrus  
Crystal Catalan

**2022 Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders**

**Introduction**

Sean Gargamelli-McCreight  
Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL

**Acceptance of Award**

Yunuen Trujillo

**2021 Fr. Louis J. Trivison Award**

**Introduction**

Todd Ray

**Acceptance of Award**

Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP

**Thank You & Closing Prayer**

**Offered by**

Deborah Rose  
Sr. Andrea Koverman, SC

## Thursday

November 10, 2022 | Keynote Presentation

**Meet the Speaker Gathering  
Welcome & Opening Prayer**

**Offered by**

Deborah Rose  
Vickey McBride

**Keynote Presentation**

**Introduction of Keynote Speaker  
Keynote Presentation**

Rita L. Houlihan  
Rafael Luciani, STD

**Thank You & Closing Prayer**

**Offered by**

Russ Petrus  
Rev. Andrew Switzer



## Keynote Presenter

### **Rafael Luciani, S.T.D.**

FutureChurch warmly welcomes **Rafael Luciani, S.T.D.**, a world renowned expert on synodality in the Catholic Church. A lay theologian from Venezuela, he has been appointed as Expert of the Theological Commission of the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops.

Luciani holds degrees of Doctor in Theology and Licenciante in Dogmatic Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome; Baccalaureatum in Philosophy and Baccalaureatum in Theology from the Pontifical Salesian University of Rome; and Licenciante in Education (with mention in Philosophy) earned from the Jesuit's Catholic University Andrés Bello in Caracas.

He is an Associate Professor of the Practice at Boston College and is currently engaged in postdoctoral research activities at the Julius-Maximilians Universität in Würzburg, Germany.

He is the author of *[Synodality: A New Way of Proceeding in the Church](#)*.



## 2022 Louis J. Trivison Award

### **Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP**

FutureChurch is honored to present **Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP** with the 2022 Louis J. Trivison in recognition her life-long efforts to educate Catholics about the importance of the Second Vatican Council.

A Dominican Sister of Hope from New York, Sr. Maureen is Professor Emerita of Theology at St. Anselm College in New Hampshire. She received her Master of Arts in Theology from Manhattan College in the Bronx and her Ph.D. in Theology from Fordham University, also in the Bronx.

The Second Vatican Council, along with its impact on our Church, is at the center of her theological research. Sr. Maureen Sullivan recently lead a four-part series, for FutureChurch, exploring Vatican II documents as the foundation for the 2023 Synod. Videos to each of the presentations and PDFs of Sr. Maureen's presentations can be found at <https://futurechurch.org/fertile-ground>. She has written two books on *Vatican II: 101 Questions and Answers on Vatican II* (2002) and *The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology* (2007).

*Named for FutureChurch co-founder, Fr. Louis Trivison, this award is given to a Roman Catholic who exhibits outstanding leadership in advancing FutureChurch's Vatican II mission or vision in one or more areas of teaching, administration, research, publication, advocacy, and pastoral care.*



## 2022 Christine Schenk Award for Young Leaders

### **Yunuen Trujillo**

FutureChurch is proud to present **Yunuen Trujillo** with the 2022 Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders in recognition of her with and on behalf of the LGBTQ+ Catholic Community.

Trujillo is a Catholic lay minister, a faith-based community organizer, and an immigration attorney. As a lay minister, she has served in young adult ministry for more than 15 years and is one of the leading figures for inclusive Catholic LGBT Ministry in the United States. She is a regular speaker at the yearly Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, where she teaches about inclusive LGBT Ministry.

She has worked with L.A. Voice PICO, a faith-based, multi-faith, multi-racial organization that works to create a society that reflects the dignity of all persons; working on issues such as immigrant rights, education, and criminal justice reform. Yunuen is also the founder of the Instagram @lgbtcatholics, an online platform of resources for Catholic LGBT Ministry, and she is the Religious Formation Coordinator (Sp) for the Catholic Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Persons of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She is the author of the new book, *LGBT Catholics: A Guide for Inclusive Ministry* (Paulist Press, 2022).

*Named for FutureChurch co-founder, Sr. Christine Schenk, CSJ, this award is given to a young Roman Catholic whose research, writing, advocacy, or ministry exhibits outstanding leadership in promoting justice in the church and whose efforts will inspire and foster a new generation of reformers and activists.*



## FutureChurch Synod Sessions

Catholics Pray, Listen and Discern  
During FutureChurch Synodal Sessions

Over the course of six weeks in Lent, nearly 600 Catholics from the United States and around the world, took part in FutureChurch's synod listening sessions. Representing more than 170 Dioceses, they told their stories of faith and perseverance and shared their doubts, hopes, and dreams for a synodal Church. **The report, "In Our Own Words,"** summarized the fruit of the gatherings and highlighted recurring themes.

continued on next page...

Pope Francis has called for a new way of being church. Rooted in the principles of Vatican II, he is preparing Catholics all over the world to enter into a new paradigm of relating to one another and discerning the future. He is urging us to “walk together” as we shape our collective future by listening to and learning from one another. Most importantly, he and his synod leaders, Sr. Natalie Becquart and Cardinal Mario Grech, are endeavoring to make the voices of those who have been excluded heard.

Although the term “synodality” may be new, the Catholics who participated in this survey have been “walking together” in solidarity with marginalized sisters and brothers for most of their Catholic lives. They have listened deeply to the suffering of those excluded and, as faith-filled Catholics, they invest their God-given life energies to bring about a richer, more just and inclusive Catholic community and world. They attest that their faith is rooted in the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching. And to the extent we can grow into an authentically synodal church, these Catholics say “Amen.”

The issues that were addressed were the priest shortage and subsequent parish closings, lay leadership in the Church, women’s equality in the Church, faith and public life, and racism within the Church.

Participants were nearly unanimous on some issues:

*Ninety-nine percent strongly agreed or agreed that married men should be ordained as priests.*

*Ninety-nine percent strongly agreed or agreed that women should be ordained.*

*Participants also indicated strong agreement (94 - 99%) on what Church leaders should do to enrich the Church and make justice a greater reality:*

- *Reverse “Ordinatio Sacerdotalis”*
- *Place women of color and women with diverse identities in positions of leadership, ministry and decision making.*

- *Open all ministries to women’s full participation.*
- *Open synods at every level to women’s full participation, decision making, and voting.*
- *Open governance, leadership, and teaching offices to women as co-equals so that they may be equally influential in the development of teachings, policies, canon law, etc.*
- *Open preaching to women and laity.*
- *Open the diaconate to women.*
- *Open the priesthood to women.*

While most participants shared their difficulty in staying in the church, almost 90% still considered themselves Catholic and more than 84% agreed that they are strongly committed to staying and renewing the Church.

Throughout the six weeks, participants shared their joys and sorrows, their heartaches and hopes, and their dreams for a more inclusive Church.

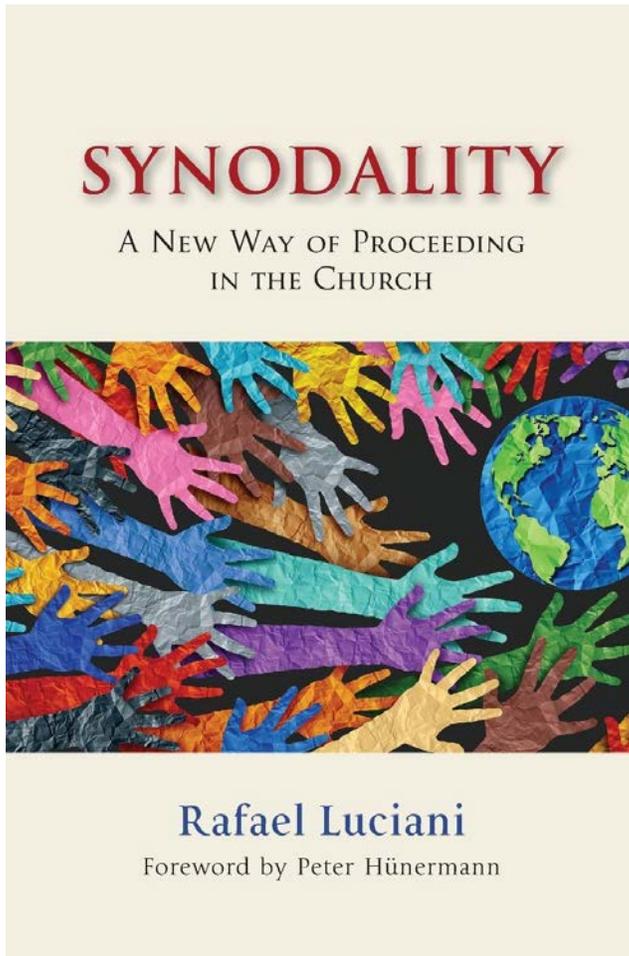
The eight hundred page report that included all the words our participants shared was sent to Pope Francis, the Synod office, the Apostolic Nuncio, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and individual bishops on Pentecost. We have received confirmation and positive responses from the Vatican Synod office and some of our bishops. We will continue to press forward to make these voices heard. One participant spoke for many with these words:

*I wanted you to know how much this effort means to me and so many others. It is wonderful to gather together and know that our voices will be carried to the Vatican. ~participant*



To see the full report go to:  
<https://futurechurch.org/justice-in-the-church/synod-report/>

# Catholics Learn How to “Shift the Culture” toward Synodality



In October, over sixty Catholics from the United States, Canada and other parts of the world gathered weekly to learn more about how to advance the promise and potential of synodality.

Having worked and worshiped in a top-down hierarchical church where clericalism thrives, these Catholics were enthusiastic to learn more about the synodality that Pope Francis has been generating since the beginning of his papacy. Participants were reminded of Pope Francis' words, "The path of synodality is the path that God expects of His Church in the third millennium." With revolutionary repercussions for all the faithful, synodality promises that both lay and ordained will share co-responsibility for discerning and calling forth new expressions of leadership, ministry, and governance.

Using Vatican Synod consultant Rafael Luciani's book, *Synodality: A New Way of Proceeding in the Church*, participants were offered a solid theological foundation for the creative work that lies ahead.

Luciani offers a stark wake-up call, writing, "Synodality is not a mere act of administrative reorganization...what is at stake is the Church's fidelity to her calling as a follower of Jesus Christ and her response to the signs of the times."

Catholics who joined were affirmed in what many already knew, that the clericalist system is the main obstacle to synodality.

*Bishops hold all the power - the executive, judicative, and legislative. And the consequences of this culture have been disastrous – with the multiplication of clergy sex abuse crimes & coverup and financial scandals, and much more...*

(Hunermann, foreword).

Luciani is clear. The institution is failing because clericalism is still the operating system rooted in a) the theology of ordained ministry, b) the exercise of power in hierarchy, c) celibacy, d) a culture of secrecy, e) the relation between power and impotence in hierarchy, and f) the idea of ontological change at ordination.

Further, canon law was developed in a clericalist culture and supports a clericalist institution. Ordination became an ontological mark of superiority rather than of service and created a two-tier system with laity in an inferior position. In order for synodality to take hold, for now, canon law must be exercised in a relaxed mode. But, without a doubt, canon law must be changed to support a non-clericalist model of church authorizing the full and equal participation and co-responsibility of lay leaders, ministers, and decision-makers in the church.

The only way out of the clericalist system is to enter into the synodal way of being church. This new way not only calls the church to be pastoral and listening, but to be a church that governs through discernment with the whole Body of Christ making decisions rooted in that discernment.

And while many welcome this moment and movement of the Spirit, the radical shift will obligate us, not only to listen and walk together, but to undertake the difficult and long work of discerning together and power sharing. We will have to intentionally engage different points of view, face-to-face, in the spirit of communal discernment. This kind of living, breathing, Gospel-centered Church will require all of us to engage in profound forms of praying, meeting, working together, discerning, making and taking decisions together.

Participants also learned that synodality is not a one-time effort, but an ongoing one, where - together - we will "shift the culture." Synodality requires us to fundamentally redefine our ecclesiology. THE ECCLESIAL "WE", is a communion of equals, from the pope to the laity, with the equal responsibility regarding identity, vocation, and mission.

Luciani stresses that synodality begins in the local church. While there was a progressive devaluation of local cultures as normative for re-interpreting tradition, theology, and faith after Paul VI, synodality rooted in authentic catholicity takes us in an entirely different direction.

Synodality, at its heart, is rooted in and enriched by the multifaceted manifestations of particular churches and their cultures. Synodality will lead to a re-ordering of the influencers who have historically shaped the teachings, policies, theologies, laws, and practice of the universal church. Thus, we are transitioning from a Western, monocultural church centered in Rome and the primacy of the Pope to a global and intercultural church that recognizes the authority of the local church.

Luciani writes that we need to affirm the splendid evidence of catholicity as we embrace the variety of local Churches with their own ecclesiastical disciplines, liturgical rites, theological heritage, spiritual gifts, and canonical norms.

Participants in the book study found that the combination of study, prayer, small group discussions and guest speakers advanced their understanding of synodality. Eighty-eight percent (88%) feel more confident that they can shift the culture of the Church toward synodality where laity and ordained share the responsibilities of discernment and decision making. One hundred percent (100%) better understand what Pope Francis is trying to achieve in terms of synodality. Seventy five percent (75%) feel better equipped to bring synodality in some form to their parish, community or diocese while 61% said they have a plan or an idea of how to begin or strengthen synodality in their parish, community, or diocese.

Participants shared what they found helpful in the sessions:

*The speakers were inspiring and experienced, not just teaching but living the change they advocate. I relished the break-out groups, which have become more free, and true with each passing week. I speak, first, of how I feel participating in the breakout groups. We are learning to listen for the Spirit and to hear their presence . . . Today's group was special in giving a strong sense of affirmation to me personally and to the synodality process as already present in our lives in the faith.*

Referring to the presentation made by Vatican Synod consultant Kristin Colberg, one participant wrote that the most important take-away was, "discovering that the same themes that were emerging in local gatherings, including some in which I have participated, have made it through to the highest levels without apparently being censored."

And in stating what they needed to continue to advance synodality, participants offered:

*I just need to link with others with the same vision or who want to be involved. I am so energized by these presentations.*

*More sharing sessions. All of the others in my breakout group are really struggling. How can we support them?*

# Expert Presenters



Sr. Donna Ciangio, OP



Kelly Meraw



Kristin Colbert, Ph.D.

*A continuing ability to be in touch with what is being done in various places at the local level as well as the progress on the universal level. I loved hearing that in some parishes, when they finished their synod discussions people said, "We should do this again next year." They got the point.*

Some wanted practical guidelines asking for more training and prayers. Another suggested, "A model outline/plan that enables us to approach our pastor and get this off the ground!"

Presenters like Sr. Donna Ciangio and Kelly Meraw certainly offered some very practical guidance as well as inspiration. During the final session, Professor Kristin Colberg, who was part of the drafting team for the Continental Phase Document, marveled at the many similarities in concerns that were shared across diverse regions and continents. She said that overwhelmingly, Catholics around the world want a) more formation for laity, priests, and bishops, b) more inclusion in all aspects of church life, ministry, and leadership, c) better homilies, and d) a concern about the exit of young people from the church.



To view the videos from the book study and explore resources from our presenters, go to:

<https://futurechurch.org/justice-in-the-church/a-study-of-synodality/>

And stay tuned for more opportunities and resources in the future!

# Synod Synthesis a Significant Step Toward Authentic Expression of U.S. Catholics Concerns and Hopes

The National Synod Synthesis released by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on September 19, 2022 represented a significant step toward advancing the promise of Vatican II. The synthesis went a long way in capturing an authentic expression of the faithful – their concerns, joys, sorrows, and hopes for a church where Gospel values of justice, equality, inclusivity, care for the marginalized, and care for creation, and more – are core to its mission.

The concerns and hopes of the nearly 600 faith-filled Catholics who participated in FutureChurch’s synod sessions during Lent were very much reflected in the National Synthesis. The inclusion of Catholic voices who have long been marginalized or dismissed by popes, bishops and other church leaders is a positive sign that synodality

-- a new way of sharing authority, ministry, and decision making -- is unfolding in our time.

The Rome-bound document synthesized 290 reports received from 179 dioceses, other offices, and 112 Catholic organizations and associations. Sixteen regions were formed to make the reporting task manageable with fifteen representing dioceses and eparchies. To capture the voices of Catholics who participated through Catholic organizations like FutureChurch and other associations and national ministries, a sixteenth region was created.

It is both refreshing and hopeful to see this good faith effort by the U.S. Synod writing team to reflect the voices of faithful Catholics who have long worked for a more just and inclusive church.

There was transparency in reporting Catholic concerns about the ravages of clergy sex abuse; the need for fully incorporating women in ordained ministry, preaching, and governance; racial and indigenous justice; LGBTQ+ inclusion; and a host of other issues that have been sidelined or ignored for too long. The report also included the preferred acronym, LGBTQ+, instead of Catholic nomenclature that has been offensive to so many Catholics. This was a sign of respect that was denied at the 2018 Synod on Youth when bishops stripped it from the final document.

The National Synthesis is hopeful precisely because it fairly represents the prophetic voices of the People of God and not the doctrinaire rigidity and clericalism that we have consistently experienced at the hands of many U.S. bishops. But we also recognize that this initial step must be followed by

additional concrete efforts to form and empower all Catholics to actualize this new, synodal way of being and doing Church where all have a share in discernment, leadership, and ministry.

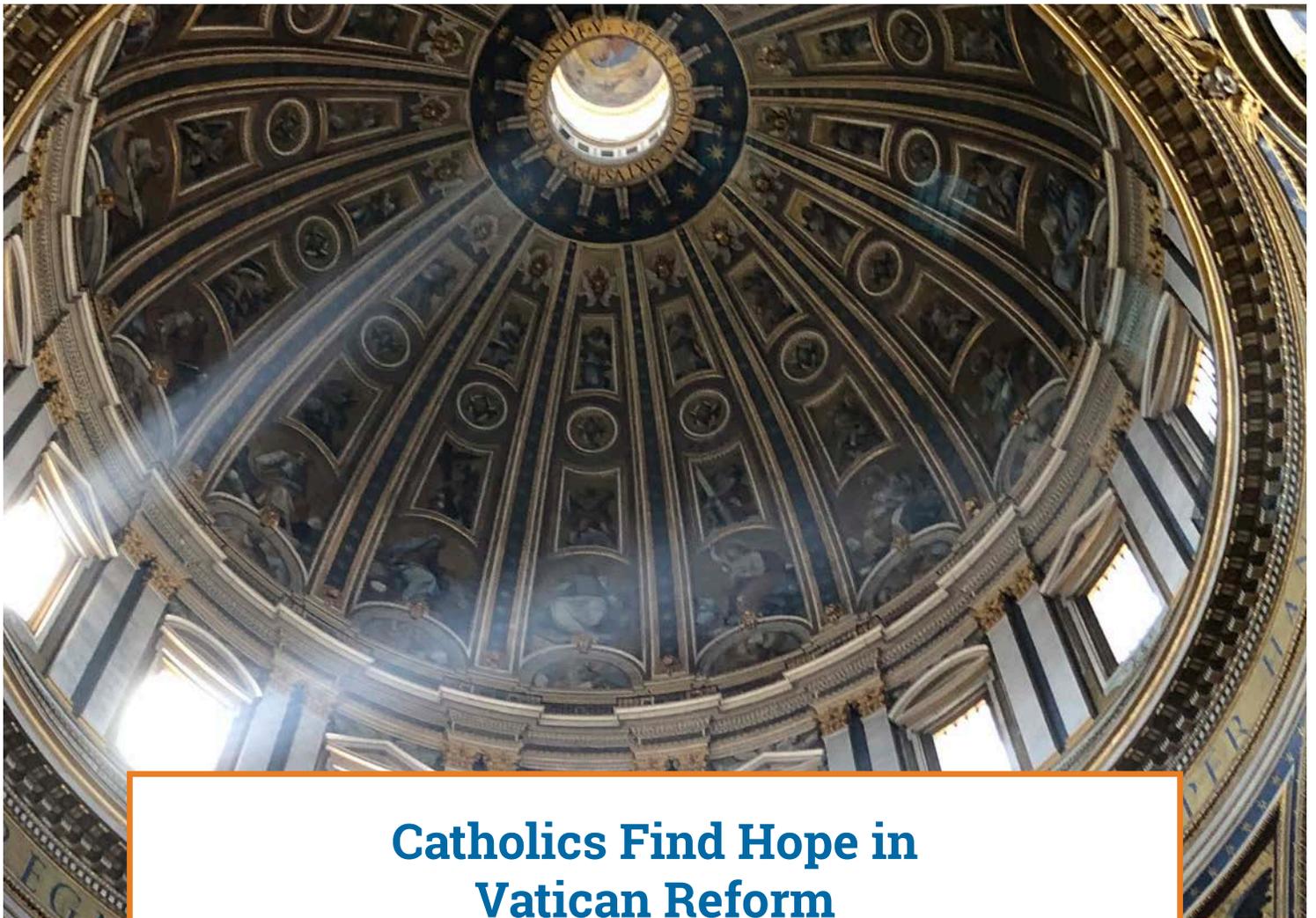
FutureChurch continues to create opportunities for Catholics to enter more fully and confidently into this new co-responsible way of discerning the future of our church. Stay tuned!

To read FutureChurch’s report, which was sent to Rome and to our bishops of our synod process which includes an appendix with all the participant responses go to <https://futurechurch.org/justice-in-the-church/synod-report/>.



National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod





## Catholics Find Hope in Vatican Reform

*Praedicate Evangelium*

On March 19, 2022 the Vatican published *Praedicate evangelium (Preach the Gospel)*, Pope Francis' long-anticipated apostolic constitution reforming the organization and structure of the Roman Curia.

FutureChurch welcomed the reforms, the possibilities they open, and urged all Church leaders – at the national, diocesan, and parish level – to study the document and discern ways they can incorporate the directives into their own structures.

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“Pope Francis has slowly placed women into leadership roles in the Vatican over the last few years. But with this new constitution, he codifies that practice, opening significant potential for women and all lay people to have greater authority in leading, influencing, and making decisions at the highest levels of our Church.”

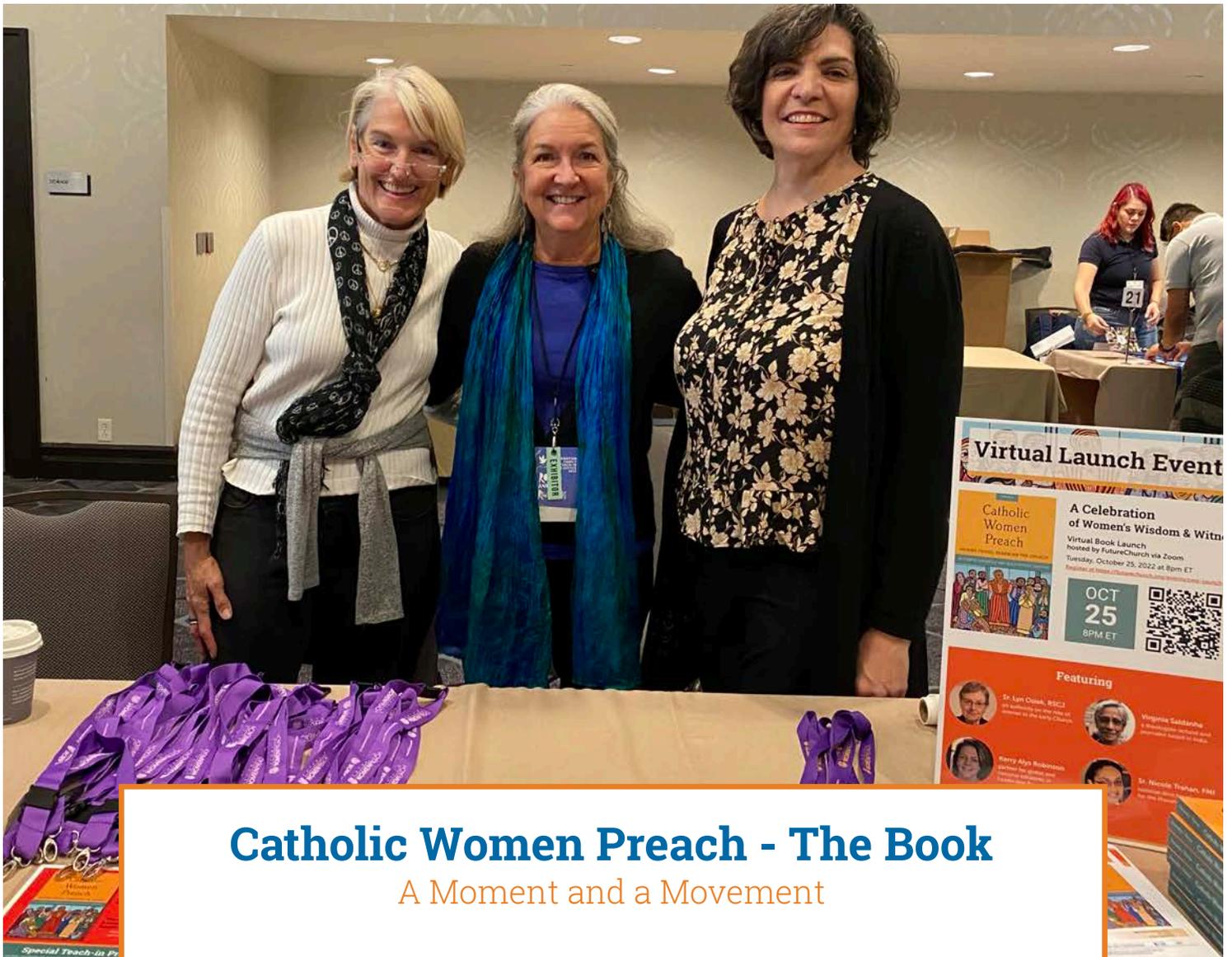
*Praedicate Evangelium* does more than reform the Curia. Pope Francis is restructuring the Church in light of the Second Vatican Council so that in its entirety, the Church is marked by its transparency, collaboration, and missionary and servant discipleship. Even the title – Preach the Gospel – calls for a Church that is engaged, active, and dialogical with the world around it. *Praedicate Evangelium* went into effect on June 5 and fully replaces *Pastor bonus* (The Good Shepherd) which was issued by Pope John Paul II in June 1988.

One of the most notable changes is the opening to “any member of the faithful” to lead one of the 16 dicasteries – or departments. FutureChurch has long advocated for the decoupling of ordination and Church leadership. Pope Francis has slowly placed women into leadership roles in the Vatican over the last few years. But with this new constitution, he codifies that practice, opening significant potential for women and all lay people to have greater authority in leading, influencing, and making decisions at the highest levels of our Church. The Roman Catholic Church has always had a credibility problem when it comes to preaching the Gospel in the world because they’ve excluded half the Church from leadership and ministry. This change could offer significant strides for women – not only in the Vatican – but in every corner of the world.

While the constitution maintains that dicasteries and other bodies within the Curia are “all juridically equal to each other,” it gives the highest priority to the Dicastery for Evangelization, signaling its centrality within the Vatican. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which had previously occupied this place of privilege will have less influence in the overall configuration of the Church.

In the past, too many faithful Catholics working in theology and in pastoral and mission roles have been punished for questioning some of the positions of the Church. They have endured investigations, censure, and silencing spearheaded by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. This change is a shift toward Vatican II that will aid the Church in better discerning the future in light of the Holy Spirit and the signs of the times.

Much of the work of the People of God, especially those who have been working for change alongside FutureChurch, is coming to fruition. But these changes must not stop at the Vatican. National episcopal conferences, dioceses, and parishes must also create equal space for women and the laity to lead the work of evangelization. The changes will not be easy or come overnight, but they are necessary if we are to engage the world in a meaningful way with the message of the Gospel. FutureChurch will continue to press Church leaders when they fall short.



## Catholic Women Preach - The Book

### A Moment and a Movement

The rules of the Church may officially bar them from offering a homily at Mass, but Catholic women can and do preach! Moreover, their preaching contributes profoundly to the common life of all the People of God - laity and ordained alike. And with the publication of the first volume of *Catholic Women Preach: Raising Voices, Renewing the Church* it is easier than ever for all the faithful to access, lift up, and celebrate women's wisdom and witness!

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Emerging from the ground-breaking website, Catholic Women Preach, this collection of reflections on the readings for Sundays and other feast days, offers an invaluable resource for weekly meditation, an inspiration for homilists, and an aid to enriching the church with diverse voices and experiences.

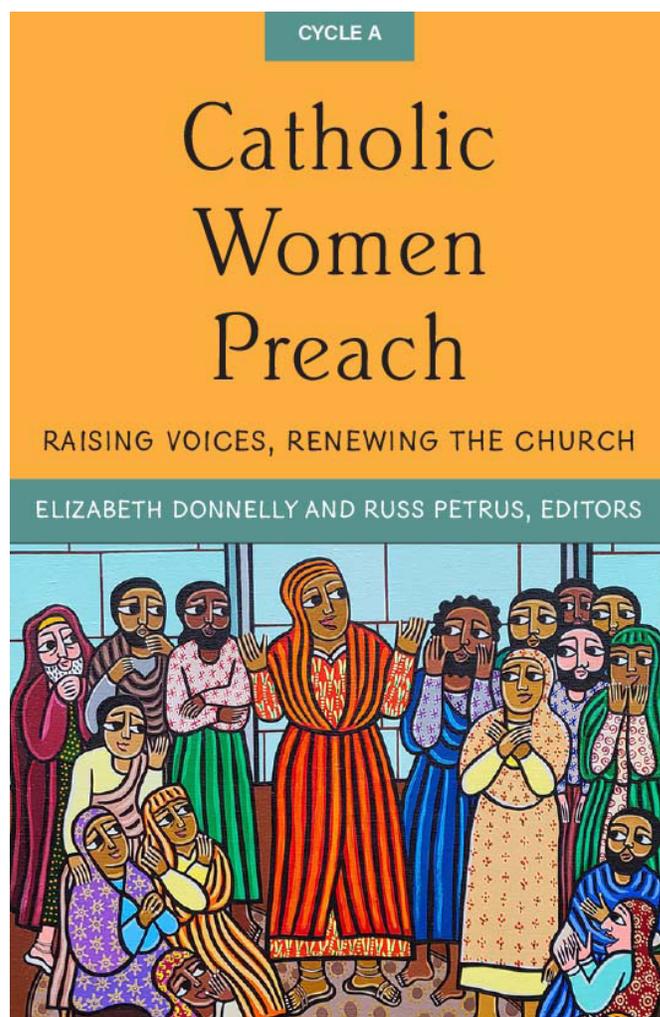
This is an important milestone not only for Catholic Women Preach, but in the history of our Church. By bearing witness to the contributions and giftedness of Catholic women, Catholic Women Preach is advancing the conversation with and about women at every level of the Church.

Published by Orbis Books, this first of three volumes is available just in time for the beginning of Cycle A of the liturgical calendar, which begins in Advent this November 2022. The volume opens with an empowering foreword by Sr. Barbara Reid, OP, one of the world's leading scholars in feminist interpretation of the Scriptures, and an introduction by co-editors, Elizabeth Donnelly and Russ Petrus, telling the story of Catholic Women Preach.

Other contributors include esteemed womanist and Black Catholic theologian, M. Shawn Copeland; Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient, Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS; African lay theologian and gender justice advocate, Nontando Hadebe; acclaimed author and speaker, Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB; and executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, Sr. Norma Pimentel, MJ.

Together, the sixty-four contributors represent an extraordinary range of voices – religious and lay, scholars, activists, and pastoral leaders of every age and ethnicity. Week in and week out, these extraordinarily gifted women have helped us mourn, celebrate, confront, and find hope in our lived realities. They have been there, challenging and inspiring us when migrant families were being separated at the border, through the worst of the COVID pandemic, and as we continue to reckon with and struggle against white supremacy and racist violence.

FutureChurch hosted a virtual book launch on October 25, 2022 to celebrate this momentous step in amplifying and centering women's voices



Cover Art by Laura James

in the Catholic Church. The launch event featured Sr. Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, an authority on the role of women in the early Church; Virginia Saldanha, a theologian-activist and journalist in India; Kerry Alys Robinson, founding executive director and partner for global and national initiatives at Leadership Roundtable; and Sr. Nicole Trahan, FMI, national director of vocations for the Marianist Sisters.

An in-person launch event is being planned for December 7th at Catholic Theological Union's Bernardin Center in Chicago, Illinois with Sr. Barbara Reid, OP heading the evenings' activities.



**Purchase your copy at**

<https://orbisbooks.com/products/catholic-women-preach-raising-voices-renewing-the-church-cycle-a>

**Royalties benefit Catholic Women Preach**

# Catholic Women Preach Continues to Break Ground and Inspire

On November 1, 2022 - All Saints Day - Catholic Women Preach entered its seventh ground-breaking year! Since launching in 2016, Catholic Women Preach has helped bring the wisdom and witness of women breaking open the word to Catholics – lay and ordained, young and old alike.

To date, 314 remarkable Catholic women from around the globe have offered 368 inspiring and challenging reflections. Week in and week out, they have helped us mourn, celebrate, confront, and find hope in our lived realities.

**We have grown!** Catholic Women Preach videos have been viewed more than 447,000 times – and an increase of about 65,000 views in the last year! engaging viewers in over 2.13 million minutes hearing and seeing Catholic women preach!

Our YouTube audience continues to grow, adding 365 subscribers over the last year for a total of more than 2,200 subscriptions on the platform.

Overall, the demographics of the viewing audience has remained steady over the years. Our viewers are predominantly female (80%) and over the age of 55 (90%).

**We are reaching a younger audience – on different platforms and in different ways:**

We earned 1,770 followers on Facebook over the year for a total of 7078 followers. While this audience remains predominantly female, it also trends much younger with more than half (51.7%) under the age of 55.

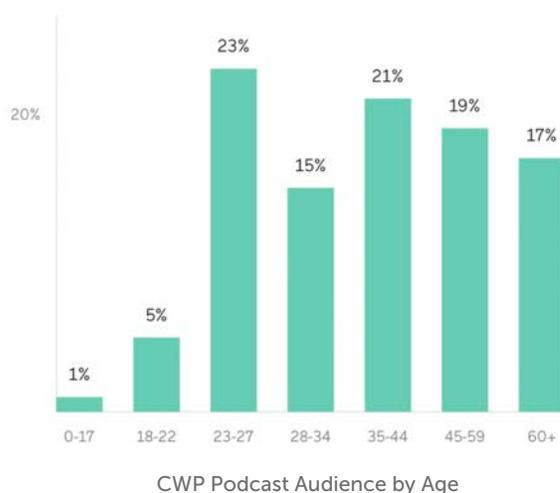
Our Twitter following continues to grow as well – adding 462 follows in the last year – for a total of 2388 followers. While we know a little less about our Twitter audience, anecdotal evidence and industry averages tell us that Twitter users are even younger.

An important component of our social media outreach is to include an image with a brief quote that encapsulates the preacher’s message each

time we share a reflection on social media. Doing so ensures that even if this younger audience is not tuning in for an entire video, they are benefitting from the wisdom and witness of women.

In the year ahead, we intend to experiment with different ways of reaching this social media audience.

**We have dedicated more resources to our podcast, which is a source of great hope and potential for the future!**



Launched in 2018, our podcast has been listened to more than 92,000 times with a growing average weekly audience of 223 listeners. Analytics confirm that our podcast audience is significantly younger than our video and social media audience. 65% of the podcast audience is under the age of 45 and the largest share is between the ages of 23 and 27 (23%). The podcast audience is also more gender diverse at 69% female and 29% male and 2% unspecified.

These numbers are very promising and highlight potential for engaging a younger, more gender diverse podcast audience in the years ahead!

Visit [www.catholicwomenpreach.org](http://www.catholicwomenpreach.org) for weekly preaching that inspires!

# Catholic Women Preach Centers Women of Color for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

In 2022, Catholic Women Preach once again intentionally centered the voices of women of color during Lent, Holy Week, and on Easter Sunday – the most sacred time in the Liturgical year. It is a privilege and honor to lift up these under-represented voices who offer challenging and invigorating reflections on the Scriptures. Moreover, these reflections were the basis for a Lenten course for lay and ordained offered by Crossroads – the continuing education program for the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College. [Visit our YouTube Page](#) to view the entire collection of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter preaching.



Preaching for Holy Thursday, Cecilia González-Andrieu, offers a reflection on stubborn hope:

*"As we step out of our comfort into the starkness of what is real, we transcend fear to see clearly that we must continue on to Jerusalem because that is where change happens."*



Evoking the lunch counter sit-ins of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Kim Harris preaches for Holy Thursday, offering a reflection on setting a welcome table:

*"Do we see, as we look at our table, not only who is there, but who is not there? Who is not invited? Who is invited but cannot gain access?"*



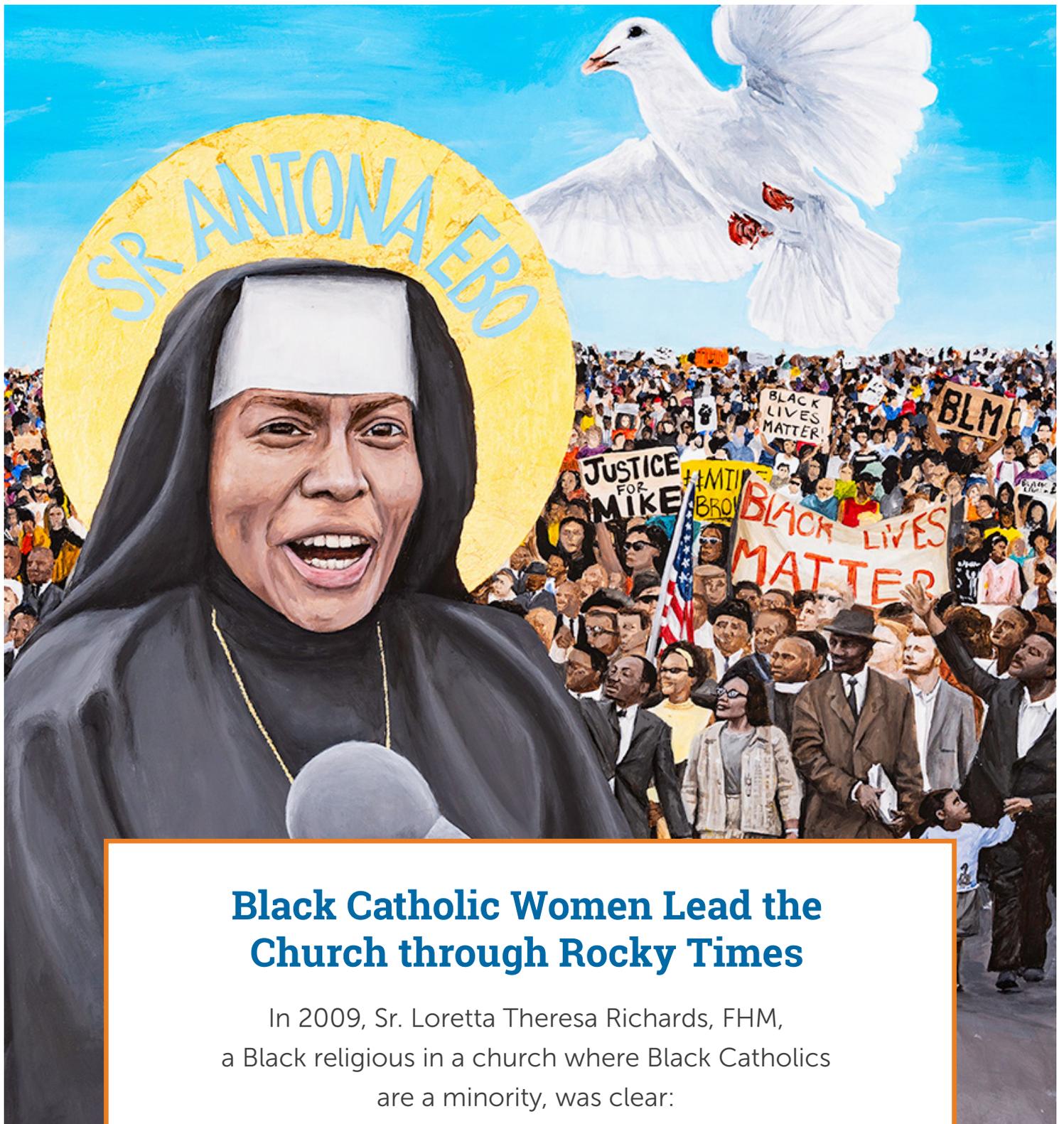
Lifting up the experience of her ancestors, Valerie D. Lewis-Mosley, OPA preaches for Good Friday:

*"Whenever I would ask my grandparents and great-grandparents about their experiences in the Jim Crow south of segregation and the terror of the Ku Klux Klan, their response was 'A burning cross has no power over the Cross of Calvary.'"*



Preaching for Easter, Kimberly Lymore encourages us to find resurrection in our own lives:

*"Today is the day we resurrect our dreams, our faith, our peace, whatever it is we have buried."*



## **Black Catholic Women Lead the Church through Rocky Times**

In 2009, Sr. Loretta Theresa Richards, FHM, a Black religious in a church where Black Catholics are a minority, was clear:

“The Catholic Church wouldn’t be Catholic if it wasn’t for us.” <sup>[i]</sup>

continued on next page...

From the 15th century start of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Catholic slaveholders from Spain and Portugal forcibly transported African and African descended peoples to the Americas with papal approval. Nicolas V (*Dum Diversas*, 1452) and Alexander XI (*Inter Caetera*, 1493) both sanctioned trafficking and slavery. Many of those who were kidnapped were practicing Catholics as the Kingdom of Kongo converted to Catholicism in 1491. From 1619 until 1740, the majority of Africans that were brought to the Americas were from Central Africa which included the Kingdom of Kongo. As the brutal enterprise expanded, with more colonial powers throughout Europe joining in, over 12.5 million people were stolen, trafficked, sold, raped, tortured, and killed.

While those with institutional Catholic power became the largest corporate slaveholders in the Americas, Catholic women of color contested the legitimacy of slavery and slave-holding peoples. After the Civil War, when the Catholic Church largely supported segregation, Black Catholic women faithfully and effectively contested discrimination and segregationist policies in white Catholic parishes, schools, hospitals, convents, seminaries, and neighborhoods<sup>[iii]</sup> and changed the trajectory of Catholicism in the United States.

Yet, the witness, contributions, and faith of Black Catholic women is not well known in most white Catholic circles. To date, there are no African American Catholics who have been canonized, although there are extraordinary efforts underway to canonize Henriette DeLille, Thea Bowman, Mother Mary Lange, and Julia Greeley.<sup>[iv]</sup>

Recently, the critical role Black Catholic women play in shaping our tradition is receiving new recognition. According to the Pew Research Center, 89% of Black Catholic women believe women should be senior religious leaders and 75% say that gender equality is critical to their faith.<sup>[v]</sup>

Further, the voices and witness of Black Catholic women are rising as they call the U.S. Bishops to reject racist practices and show authentic leadership in confronting the evils of white supremacy within the Church and white nationalism in society.

As Black Catholics face the disproportionate concentration of parishes and schools slated for closure, sociologist Tia Noelle Pratt, who researches systemic racism writes,

“We see churches closing in our diocese that serve large Black Catholic populations. Black churches bear the burden of that when dioceses decide that churches need to close and parishes need to reorganize.”<sup>[vi]</sup>

Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies in New Orleans observes that in the face of white supremacy, the killing of Black women and men by law enforcement, and the white nationalism that has become a destructive, brutal political force throughout the United States, “Black Catholic women are not fully represented in the public dialogue of current events...”<sup>[vii]</sup>

While “leadership of our U.S. Catholic Church struggle to respond to the current state of affairs with moral authority, Gospel value clarity and a consistent praxis that reflects its own teaching”, Bellow sees that:

*Black Catholic women are very clear that Black lives matter. Some of us have taken to the streets to protest; others are responding creatively — in word, music, the arts, mask-making. We are busy raising children, checking the wellness of spouses and friends, caring for elders. Some have responsibility for multiple generations of Black lives in an age when support and resources — health care, education, internet access, paycheck protection, rule of law — are reserved for those who can already well afford them.*

Olga Segura, former Opinion Editor for *National Catholic Reporter*, asked if the bishops believe Black lives matter:

*I believe that the church must explicitly declare: Black Lives Matter. This would allow the church and its leaders to work with a group that has the experience and policies already in place for working toward racial justice — especially with a younger generation of activists who have worked to fight for issues many in the Catholic Church fight for, including immigration reform.*<sup>[viii]</sup>

Black Catholic pastoral theologian, Valerie D. Lewis-Mosley points out the obvious - but ignored - reality of Black women:

*Historically no one could hear, protect or defend Black women, as they were brutalized, maimed and raped by those who had legal although illegitimate jurisdiction over the bodies of our African matriarchal ancestors.*

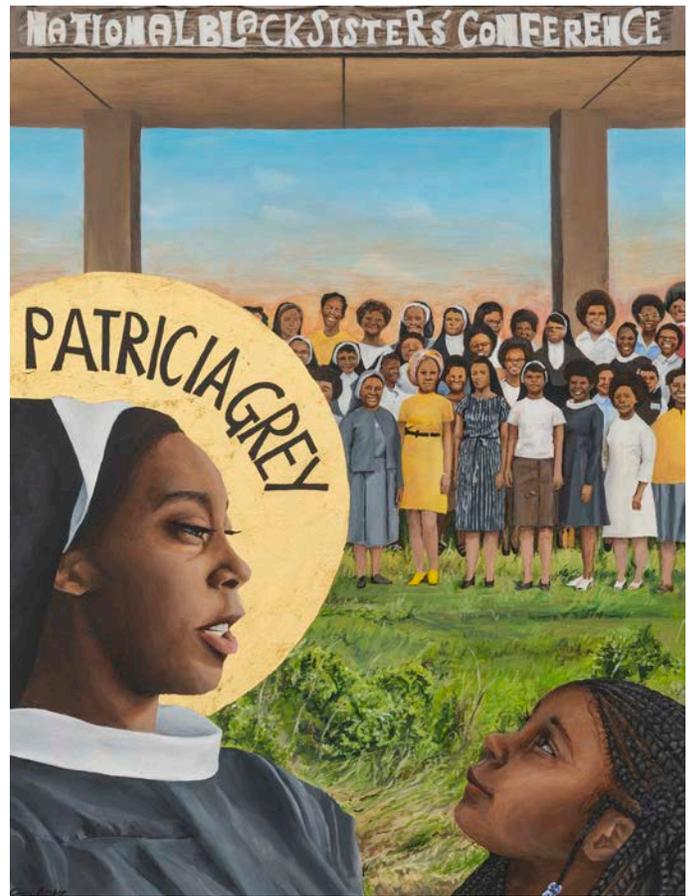
*Generations later, attacks on the bodies of Black women continue. This also occurs in the unjustified challenges to the Black feminine voice. The breaking of their bodies and shedding of their blood by police force and brutality often ends in loss of the very sanctity of life and dignity of the human womanist life force. It is the killing of the Imago Dei in the feminine spirit...the aborted life of Black women and girls...<sup>[viii]</sup>*

The scourge of clergy sex abuse and the coverup can be found in the earliest records of the slave trade when clerics purchased and raped African women at will.<sup>[ix]</sup> Rev. Bryan Massingale points out that the racist stereotyping that portrayed Black women as sexually promiscuous began during the era of slavery is present today such that "Black victims of sexual abuse are even less likely to be believed than white victims."<sup>[x]</sup>

Black Catholic women, consecrated and lay, have been at the forefront of resisting and dismantling white supremacy, segregation, and white nationalism. But the stories of their resistance are just beginning to be heard. "The saga of America's black women who have dared to be poor, chaste, and obedient is largely untold," wrote Sister Mary Shawn Copeland in 1975. "It is an uneasy story, not only because it is rooted in the American dilemma - racism - but also because the position of [a] woman in an oppressed group is traditionally delicate and strategic."<sup>[xi]</sup>

The National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) is one important example of Black women organizing to challenge racism and white supremacy in the Church and in society. Established in 1968 after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Sr. M. Martin De Porres Grey took up leadership challenging white privilege, power, and racism.

In their first position paper written in 1969, "The FutureChurch 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Event



Patricia Grey. by Chloe Becker. Commissioned by FutureChurch.

Survival of Soul" the NBSC set out their work:

*We, the members of the National Black Sisters Conference pledge to work unceasingly for the liberation of black people.*

*The reality in American society today makes it inescapably clear to us that our attempt to free black people must begin with a forthright denunciation of the problem recognizable as white racism. Expressions of individual and institutional racism found in our society and within our Church are declared by us to be categorically evil and inimical to the freedom of all men everywhere, and particularly destructive of black people in America. We are cognizant of our responsibility to witness to the dignity of all persons as creatures of God, and are acutely aware of the fact that failure to denounce white racism, in fact, perpetuates this evil. Moreover, our failure to speak out against this evil exposes us to the risk of miscarrying and betraying that scared trust which God our Father has seen fit to place in our hands (published in Stamped with the Image of God: African Americans As God's Image in Black).*

Since that time, the National Black Sisters' Conference has consistently called for Church leaders to align themselves with the Gospel. When the head of the USCCB, Archbishop Jose Gomez publicly demeaned Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements, the NBSC spoke up:

*As president of the Bishops' Conference, Black Catholics had hoped that you and your brother bishops would have acted in solidarity with those who have suffered at the hands of white supremacy since first being kidnapped from their homeland and enslaved with the blessing of the Catholic Church.*

*In 1968, the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus declared that the Catholic Church is a "racist institution", and while significant progress has been made, the Church continues to fail its African American members by its frequent silence and now its condemnation of Black Lives Matter.<sup>[xii]</sup>*

Finally, it is a sign of hope when white Catholic women stand in solidarity and work alongside Black Catholic women. Most recently the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) joined the National Black Sisters' Conference in decrying efforts to suppress the vote in the United States calling the right to vote, "sacred."

*The National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC) and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) strongly oppose all attempts to restrict that participation by limiting the sacred right to vote. The strength and vibrancy of our democracy is dependent on the right of all people to vote regardless of their race, zip code, economic status, or party affiliation.*

*We must call out elected officials, at every level, who continue to introduce measures that would return us to the era of "Jim Crow." They are celebrating our dark past by enacting laws that limit participation and threaten our democracy. We pledge to oppose them at every turn, and we promise to support legislation that will ensure all people can exercise their precious right to vote.*

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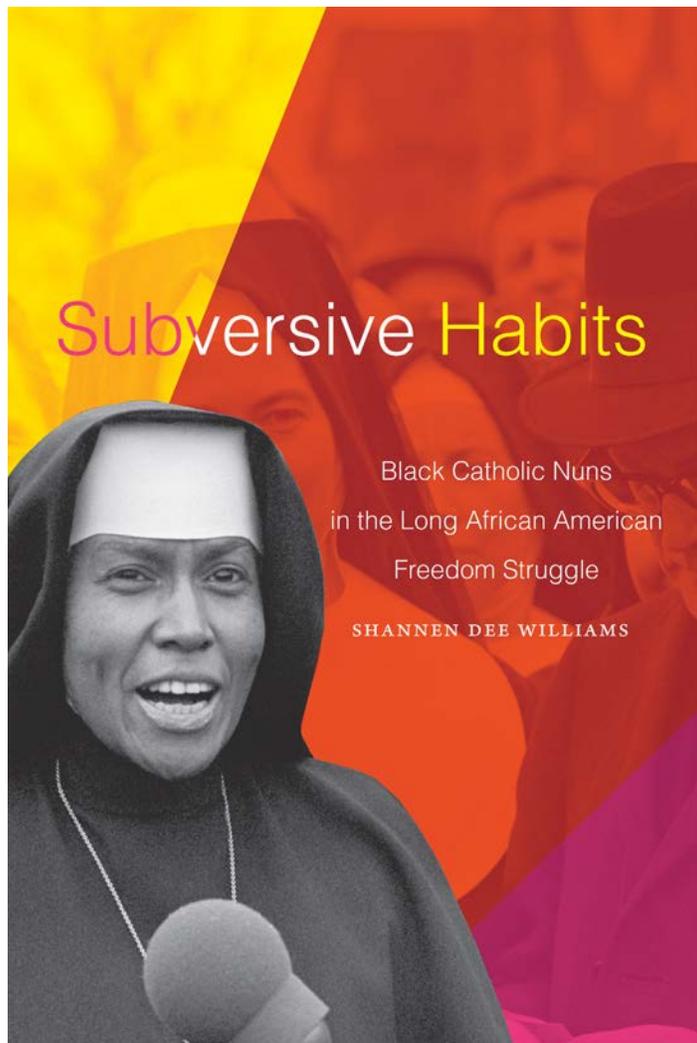
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# Catholics Comment on Hard Truths Found in Dr. Shannen Dee Williams' book "Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle"



In August, approximately one hundred and fifty Catholics gathered weekly for a four-part study of the book, *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle*, sponsored by FutureChurch. This examination of the pioneering research by Shannen Dee Williams, Ph.D. drew both Black Catholics and White Catholics. It also drew members of religious communities.

This intentional, albeit temporary, community of seekers, understood that they were being invited to bear witness to a difficult truth about our Catholic history, a truth that had long been submerged and denied. Using the tools of faith – prayer, song, study, and witness – the group learned, listened deeply, and held themselves accountable as they explored gut wrenching realities together.

## **A Slave Holding, Segregationist Church**

White participants (composing approximately 80% of the group), like the rest of white America, received a sanitized version of slavery and segregation. The white educational enterprise shielded them from the abject violence and brutality of the slavery regime, while obscuring the ways it corrupted economic, social, and political life, disproportionately rewarding white citizens and disadvantaging black citizens. Moreover, they learned that while

bad white people inaugurated slavery, good white people stopped it-- a notion that erases the widespread efforts of black citizens to disrupt and overturn the cruel enterprise.

This sanitizing mythology was further substantiated by white Catholics who trusted in the virtue of their Church on this matter. They believed the institutional Church had not only stood against slavery and segregation from the beginning but had consistently worked to dismantle it.

But Williams' research challenged those consoling myths by demonstrating the Catholic Church's complicity in slavery and segregation. Catholic popes not only inaugurated the transatlantic slave trade, but they enriched their coffers by buying, selling, and using slave labor in the building of their missions. Further, the Catholic Church was one of the largest practitioners of segregation during the Jim Crow era, keeping Black Catholics out of their orders, seminaries, and churches.

## Connecting the Past to the Present

The connection between the Church's collusion in our racist past and present-day racist violence from white America was not lost on these participants. One reflected that learning more about the Church's racist past, "helped me understand why the Church continues to fail us by not addressing the racism that is still so prevalent today."

Others attested to the transformative power of opening oneself to the witness of those who have experienced racism within our Church and society.

*It [the book] gave me a different lens through which to understand the perniciousness of racism in the United States. Seeing it so vividly lived out in the Church made me understand, viscerally, how White Supremacy has completely saturated our entire society. I thought I knew about this, but my knowledge before reading this book was somewhat detached and cerebral. I am White. I am in a new space of reckoning.*

Some spoke of their exasperation with the noxious mix of racism and religion.

*This pernicious attitude and mindset continues into the 21st century, among Christians and especially among Catholics who seem to me to hold themselves above all this evil. Having read Robert Jones' 'White Too Long,' I am nearly fed up with the American Catholic Church.*

## Pioneering Black Women in Majority White Congregations

While the chief focus of Williams' work is to correct the historical record and recover the prophetic work of Black Catholic nuns who confronted the racist institutions of their day, that story could not be fully understood without shining a light on some hidden aspects of white congregational life.

While recognizing that white sisterhoods were a pioneering force in the spread of the Gospel in the United States, Williams contends that few have considered that "before 1850 white congregations, including some of the earliest saints and sainthood candidates, relied on the labor, sale, and brutal mistreatment of enslaved people – and the economic benefits of whiteness and racial segregation -- to establish and secure

the financial futures of their orders...."(5).

According to Williams, most white congregations "enforced racial exclusion and institutionalized ideas of white superiority and Black and Brown inferiority in their ranks and social service ministries for most of their histories..." facts that remain "one of the Church's best-kept secrets." (5).

And, as many Black women attested in oral interviews with Williams, "...when white sisterhoods did admit African Americans into their novitiates and convents, this rarely translated into integration – let alone sincere inclusion – without intense Black struggle and suffering" (5).

Sr. Jocita Colbert, President of the National Black Sisters Conference, who joined the book study's third session as a presenter, confirmed that this intense struggle and suffering still occurs today. She explained that the lack of respect that some Black women suffer in majority white congregations often results in their leaving the congregation or reconsidering their vocations in religious life. Many religious vocations have been lost as a result.

## Participants Respond

Many participants responded to the legion of examples of anti-black racism with sadness, anger, shock, and indignation. One participant wrote, "The history of racism in American Catholic (white) women's congregations is a real gut punch."

Another expressed indignation:

*[What most troubled me was] the discriminatory attitudes and hard racism and supremacy of white sisters who saw themselves as generously serving "inferior" people, while being destructive of the self-esteem of those children...*

A common thread for white Catholics, many who had obtained a Catholic education, was the recognition that their education had been devoid of Black Catholic history and the complicity of their Church in racism.

I have had 16 years of Catholic education and many more years of activity, starting with charismatic prayer group, Cursillo, religious education teacher,

divorced Catholics ministry, RCIA team member – [but this knowledge] brought me to tears when I realized all that I had not been aware of.

A self-identified Black Catholic who had been a student of the Oblates, the first successful Roman Catholic sisterhood established by women of African descent, expressed her surprise about the role racism played in the Church.

*As a cradle Black lay Catholic who was taught K-8 by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, I didn't know such intolerance, hatred and just plain awfulness existed in our Church.*

For others, grief and anger catalyzed them to question their own lack of awareness.

The heavy reality of the book, the content on the life in sisterhoods broke my heart, angered my psyche, and made me question my own blindness.

While not thinking of myself as a white supremacist all these years, I believe that is what I have been. No excuses.

### **White Women Religious Awakened**

Self-identified white women religious shared their experience engaging with Williams' research, confirming some of Williams' key points about the pitfalls of white-led educational and social ministries in Black communities.

*All of this was eye-opening to me. Even though I had ministered in the Black community for over a third of my time in this diocese and had some contact with Black Sisters from NSBC in the 70s, I did not have an appreciation of the overall issues addressed in the book study.*

*Having taught in our integrated schools and being in touch with some of these young Black women even today, how ignorant I was/am of their experiences. Our schools did seem a safe place for them to be themselves to some degree and, fortunately, leadership opportunities were available to them. I was not conscious that these young women were not encouraged to pursue religious life.*

With regards to congregational life, many expressed sadness over the fact that they had been unaware of the realities Black women faced

throughout the history of the Church and in their religious communities. One religious wrote that the most important take-away from the study was, "How much I don't know and how much we were not told in our formation as Sisters in the early 60s about the reality in our world at the time."

Others expressed similar opinions.

As a member of a religious community which had a few women of color at the time when I entered, I had never understood what they had experienced and why they did not stay. I am surprised now that I was so oblivious at the time.

To be honest, until recently, I had not given much thought to the reasons the few Black women were drawn to my community and to why they had left. Presently, we have one Black sister who has remained for 29 years, and I did not wonder what she found in my community to support her all these years. Thank you so much for the opportunity to open my mind and heart through these sessions!

### **Prophetic Black Catholic Nuns Shaping Our Faith**

If Williams' objective was to weave the crucial witness and prophetic work of Black Catholic Sisters back into our common Catholic narrative, she was effective.

Participants learned that the story of Black Catholicism in America began long before 1619 and, since those beginnings, Black Catholic Nuns have been leaders in the freedom struggle and prophets for our time. One participant captured the spirit, writing, "The tenacity of our Black sisters and their strong belief in the Church drove them to keep up the fight. God bless every one of them."

The enthusiasm for proclaiming the Good News of Black Catholic Sisterhoods was expressed by a participant, "The stories of these great Black Catholic Sisters should be told from every pulpit, every classroom, every adult gathering, and RCIA program!"

Another expressed the need to make sure younger Catholics know the history.

*[The most important take-away was] how much Black Catholics have contributed to Catholicism in the US under horrific situations. Their*

*commitment and persistence are incredible. Their stories need to be told and heard by the young. The youth are today's Catholics and they need to know the truth so that racism can be addressed and stopped.*

### **Black Catholic Participants Express Hope**

Self-identified Black Catholic participants expressed satisfaction with the fact that white Catholics were present and open to learning more about the Black experience in the Catholic Church.

One wrote, "I am happy that it [this study] was brought to a predominantly white upper middle-class audience."

Another spoke of the importance of recovering the history of Black Catholics, indigenous Catholics, and other Catholics of color advocating that the promise and the failures of our Church be taught to all Catholics with honesty and integrity.

*As a Black Catholic and convert, I was delighted to find this study and participate in this very important dialogue. Catholic education has an important role to play in lifting up Black Catholic history, indeed its vast history with indigenous people and people of color worldwide. But it must be done with honesty, integrity, and a Spirit of reconciliation. I felt [that Spirit] was evident in this study. There was no spirit of guilt or appeasement. The truth, even hard truths like those presented in this book will set free any and every one willing to receive the deliverance it offers.*

Still another reflected on the Catholic education they received, and the insights gained later in life.

*This was kind of a walk down memory lane. I got my Catholic education in the church, in the early 1960's, with hippy priests and nuns. Looking back now I guess it was more of a missionary experience. I remember prayers, cues of when to kneel, sit, stand, songs to this day. Hearing from others in the small groups I was surprised at the different experiences we all had. Realizing I was too young to understand the racism, bigotry that was there I thought this was the best of times. It was a shock later in life.*

### **Racial and Reparative Justice: The Work of the Gospel**

The imperative to work for racial and reparative justice was voiced over and over by participants who wrote, "We have an obligation to provide reparations, both financially and educationally, and to acknowledge and apologize to Sisters of color in our own congregation and throughout the Church."

Another suggested that the Church should develop, "A national plan of action that can be adapted to each parish and community."

One voiced the need for reconciliation, "I believe the reality of the experience of African-Americans needs to be acknowledged. Many religious communities still have not apologized for their behavior."

Finally, one participant made clear that their belief in God was the key to a world where all of God's children were celebrated and loved.

*I have faced racism in the church, inside the church, outside the church, often mistaken for somebody people perceive as one of them. I believe in GOD, creator of the awesome heavens and earth. How can I look at this splendor and not think that my Lord and my God has wanted good for us ALL? We come in different colors as the rainbows in the skies, we should be celebrated as wonders of his creation. I understand that only through love of Jesus will I be saved. Thank you for educating me, giving me the tools to search and inform myself, and seek truth.*



To view the videos from the book study and explore our free downloadable **Women Witnesses for Racial Justice** resources, go to:

<https://futurechurch.org/wicl/women-witnesses-for-racial-justice/>



## Catholics Women Make Gains in the Church

A Synod Witness

On March 16, 2022, Deborah Rose, Co-Director of FutureChurch offered a witness for our synodal session on Women's Equality and Full Participation in the Catholic Church. It has been updated to include changes made that benefit women after March 16th.

The text is reprinted on the following pages.

continued on next page...

I appreciate this chance to offer a witness. But, it is just that, one witness. I will inevitably fall short in saying what needs to be said on this topic. I will not capture the full picture, nor name all the women I want to name; those whom I want this Church to love, and to love fiercely.

When people at parties ask me what I do, Catholic or not, they usually laugh at my answer, the perceived futility of my work. Or, they go quiet; that awkward, stilted quiet that usually leads to one of us deciding we need another drink at the bar, or, the bathroom.

But if the other person is curious enough to learn more, somewhere around the 8 minute mark they inevitably ask, "Why do you stay?"

"Why would any woman stay in the Catholic Church after being treated the way they are treated?"

Well, every woman on this call, every man, every person, will have their own answer to that question – a question I am sure you've also been asked.

But, for me, it's personal.

There's a fire in my belly that hasn't been extinguished in the 66 years I've been on this planet. I expect I will die with it. Since I was young, I have always passionately cared for the poorest women and children at the edges of existence. As my mother told me over and over again growing up, "Debbie, you are always for the underdog."

And I recognize the role that this behemoth, the Catholic Church, plays in exacting justice for vulnerable women, or hobbling and endangering them by sacralizing men's worst impulses. Working for, and alongside women so they might gain equality, dignity, autonomy, access; that is what I was born to do.

As a kid, I went to church most every day in the summers, during Lent, and on First Fridays. I lived about 5 minutes from the "compound" – the graveyard, grotto, convent, priesthouse, school and parish, and loved being there. I had a happy existence and I felt very close to God.

But, as I grew up, like most women, I began to recognize the limitations that were being placed on my life.



Deborah Rose Delivers Petitions in Rome, 2018

College was out for the girls in our family. I married young; became a mother. In my small town, I got condolences instead of congratulations when I had daughters three and four.

But, like most women, I learned to resist. On vocation Sunday, with my four daughters lined up in the pew next to me, Father aimed his homily at the men and boys. My girls and I and all the rest of the women at Mass were invisible. The injustice infuriated me. When I went to receive the Eucharist, and Father offered, "The Body of Christ" I replied, "Not yet." Jesuit Daniel Berrigan once said, "Until women are fully integrated into the Catholic Church, every time I go to the altar, I feel compromised."

I have never felt called to the priesthood, but I understand how important it is for women to be priests. I remember the first time I saw a womanpriest. She was an Episcopal priest that I had heard about because of her work on the streets with the poor. I was late getting to the church, and by the time I was able to slip into the back bench, she was already preaching. She was petite, but she had on the full priestly regalia; green for a Sunday in Ordinary time. And she had both hands in the air as she energetically preached the Gospel. But, as I watched I noticed her vestments were moving. And the movement did not coincide with her preaching body. It continued about a minute

more, and then, out from under her vestments popped a tiny, toddling, blond boy; who then, began running circles around her as she preached. It was her grandson. And he was just being a kid. And she was just being a grandma, even as she preached about the plight of the poor and Jesus to her parishioners. As I sat in the back pew, I wept, watching the familiarity of it all, the joy, the humanity. I thought, what would it be like if we, Catholics, saw that modeled at our altars?

We are an impoverished bunch. That's for sure. We are left starving for women's voices, women's faith, women's wisdom, women's love throughout our Catholic land.

And many of us struggle on, working ever so hard to squeeze out meaning in a communal life, too narrowly imagined by a group of elitist, clericalist men.

The same men who:

fuss about which pronouns can be used in baptisms;

- try to determine which form of contraception women can use;
- discount women of color who, because of their Catholic faith, say Black Lives Matter
- condemn women who love and marry other women;
- punish women religious when they step out of line;
- and cover up when little girls and vulnerable women are sexually abused by one of their own.

This is a corrupted, clericalist structure; one that women are resisting; that women are dismantling; that women are re-imagining and re-building.

Women are rising. They always have. They always will.

Think of Mary Magdalene. She was close to Jesus. I dare say she is his co-equal in Spirit. And HE recognized her faith, her relationship with God in her own right. And he relied on her, her gifts, her support, and her courage in the face of brutality.

When others fled, she and the other women stayed. When the church in the West tried to downgrade her to prostitute status, feminist theologians and biblical scholars recovered her and her true historical role; a role for which she was finally officially recognized in 2016 by the Vatican - the *Apostle to the Apostles*.

Think of Phoebe. She is named diakonos in the Bible, and although she is an underachiever in the tradition of a male dominated church that applies one set of interpretive rules to men and another set to women - women theologians, biblical scholars, and canonists have recovered her historical role - her authentic leadership and ministry - for all the Church to follow.

“Women are rising.  
They always have.  
They always will.”

Recall the way women organized into religious communities where they could expand their autonomy and their missions in the face of an increasingly patriarchal and hierarchical church. Religious sisters played a critical role in shaping Christianity by establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages - and confronting poverty and injustice of every sort. And, as we witnessed in 2009 and 2012, when the Vatican and the US bishops tried to crack down on them, they resisted. And I might say, in stellar form!

Think of the way Black Catholic women religious disrupted slavery's ravages, de-segregated white religious congregations, confronted racism within the Catholic Church, and challenged the oppression of their day by educating and caring for children of color. We rightly know John Augustus Tolton, the first Black priest in the United States, but have not yet understood and appreciated his risk taking mother, Martha. She played a critical role in the life of the Church when, with three small children in tow, including John, she escaped slavery by rowing a broken down boat across the Mississippi to Illinois.



A group gathers to protest the vision of the LCWR as a part of NunJustice project, which FutureChurch was a part of.

Consider the way women have pioneered a pathway to the priesthood today in the face of excommunication by churchmen. They are growing a community of ordained equals who are rebuilding the priesthood into a servant priesthood.

### Since Vatican II

Deborah Rose Delivers Petitions in Rome, 2018

Women religious refashioned their communities. They have "come out" as CEO, CFOs, canon lawyers, heads of Catholic universities, pastors at parishes, advocates for the poor and for those whom the church shamed and excluded. Think of Jeannine Gramick.

### Since Vatican II

Women entered male dominated fields and became theologians, historians, biblical scholars, canon lawyers, ecclesiologists, liturgists, chancellors and more. Womanist, feminist, mujerista and queer theology took hold and offered a life-giving lens by which to re-read our scriptures and our tradition.

### Since Vatican II

Eighty percent of all lay ecclesial ministers are women. Most of them have been educated, often at their own expense.

And although there were troubles aplenty under Pope John Paul II, who wanted to remarket the sacralized repression of women under the clever new title "complementarity," with its famous descriptors of women, as "feminine geniuses," women are rising.

After the election of Pope Francis in 2013, there have been some significant changes. And these changes have come about because of the decades long work of women.

### In 2014

Sr. Mary Melone was appointed the first female rector of a Roman pontifical university.

Marie Collins, Irish survivor of priest abuse, and a number of other women were appointed to the first ever Vatican commission for the protection of children from clergy sex abuse.

### In 2015

Francis halted the Vatican crackdown on the Leadership Conference of Women Religious because of their faithful tenacity.

At the 2015 Synod on the Family, the head of the International Union of Superiors General, Sr. Carmen Sammut, lobbied hard for the inclusion

of women. And Francis' new synod structure with small language groups offered more opportunities for those women to influence the process.

And at that same synod, Canadian Archbishop Paul-Andre Durocher was the first to publicly call for women deacons in such a setting. He would not be the last as we would see in 2019.

### In 2016

Francis issued the Decree on Holy Thursday's Foot Washing Ceremony to include women. While that may not seem important to Catholics in the west, in some regions, the bishops quit offering the ceremony rather than include women.

In May, because the women of the International Union of Superiors General pressed, Pope Francis created a commission with half women and half men to study women deacons. Phyllis Zagano was a force to be reckoned with in Rome and beyond.

In June, Pope Francis elevated the memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to a feast day, calling her the Apostle to the Apostles.

Barbara Jatta was the first woman appointed as director of the Vatican Museums.

### In 2017

Two lay women, were appointed as under-secretaries in the Vatican Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life.

### In 2018

At the Synod on Youth, for the first time, the final document called for the inclusion of women as a "matter of justice." Young women and men would not be silenced. And the bishops listened.

### In 2019

Because women courageously came forward, Pope Francis publicly acknowledged for the first time that women religious were being sexually abused by priests.

The first women consultors were appointed to

the organizing structure for the Synod of Bishops.

That year, seven women were appointed to the governing body of the Congregation for Religious Life; a very important shift, since clerics had always maintained control.

And in October, the bishops of the Amazon called for women deacons in a region where priests are scarce, and women have always led and built up the Church.



Voices for Catholic Women Campaign at Synod on the Amazon

### In 2020

The first woman was appointed to one of the highest-ranking posts at the Secretariat of State.

In August of that year, six European women with backgrounds in finance were appointed to join eight cardinals as members of the Council for the Economy.

### In 2021

Pope Francis issued the motu proprio, *Spiritus Domini* which officially and canonically sanctioned women to serve as lectors and acolytes.

Sr. Raffaella Petrini was named the number two position in the governorship of Vatican City, making her the highest-ranking woman in the Vatican.

Sr. Alessandra Smerilli was named to the interim position of secretary of the Vatican's development office, which deals with justice and peace issues.



Catholics Witness for Equality in the Church in Ireland on International Women's Day 2020

Sr. Natalie Becquart was named as undersecretary to the Synod of Bishops and will be the first woman to vote at the synod.

## In 2022

On March 19, Pope Francis issued introduced a landmark reform, Praedicate Evangelium, that will allow any baptized lay Catholic, including women, to head most Vatican departments under a new constitution for the Holy See's central administration. The new constitution took effect on Pentecost and will have a significant impact on the institution's relationship with women opening new positions of authority to them across the board.\*

In July, Pope Francis, for the first time, named three women to serve as members of the Vatican committee that vets bishop nominations. Italian sister Raffaella Petrini, French sister Yvonne Reungoat and laywoman Maria Lia Zervino will join the previously all-male office. The appointments are the latest in a series of significant moves allowing women more say in Catholic Church governance. The dicastery oversees the work of most of the church's 5,300 bishops, who run dioceses around the world. Its members -- including cardinals, bishops and now women -- meet periodically to evaluate new bishops who are proposed by Vatican ambassadors.\*\*

**Women are rising. All over the world.**

They are making new demands for women's equality in Germany as they continue their synodal process.

They are holding churchmen accountable in Australia as their plenary process proceeds.

And they are gathering in the streets in India and crying out for justice, when criminals dressed in bishops' clothing rape and abuse nuns.

Women are the lifeblood of the church.

They have shaped me in profound ways: whether it was struggling over a theological treatise by Rosemary Radford Ruther; being challenged to see my own participation in racist structures by Diana Hayes, Shawn Copeland and Shannen Dee Williams; or witnessing the courage, candor, and strength of women under direct attack by churchmen, like Chris Schenk, Louise Akers, and Pat Farrell.

I have been forever transformed by women in our church. And I am profoundly grateful. How about you?

\*The March 19 landmark legislation of Pope Francis has been added since it offers a deep systemic shift in the structure of the institutional church.

\*\*The appointment of three women to the Office of Bishops is a historical move and one that will give women much greater authority in the selection of bishops.



## FutureChurch Welcomes the Appointment of Three Women to the Dicastery for Bishops; Celebrates Women's Persistent Call for Equality

On July 13, 2022, Pope Francis fulfilled [a recent pledge](#) by appointing three women - Sr. Raffaella Petrini, F.S.E., Sr. Yvonne Reungoat, F.M.A., and Dr. Maria Lia Zervino – to the Vatican's influential Dicastery for Bishops, which advises the pope on episcopal appointments throughout the world.

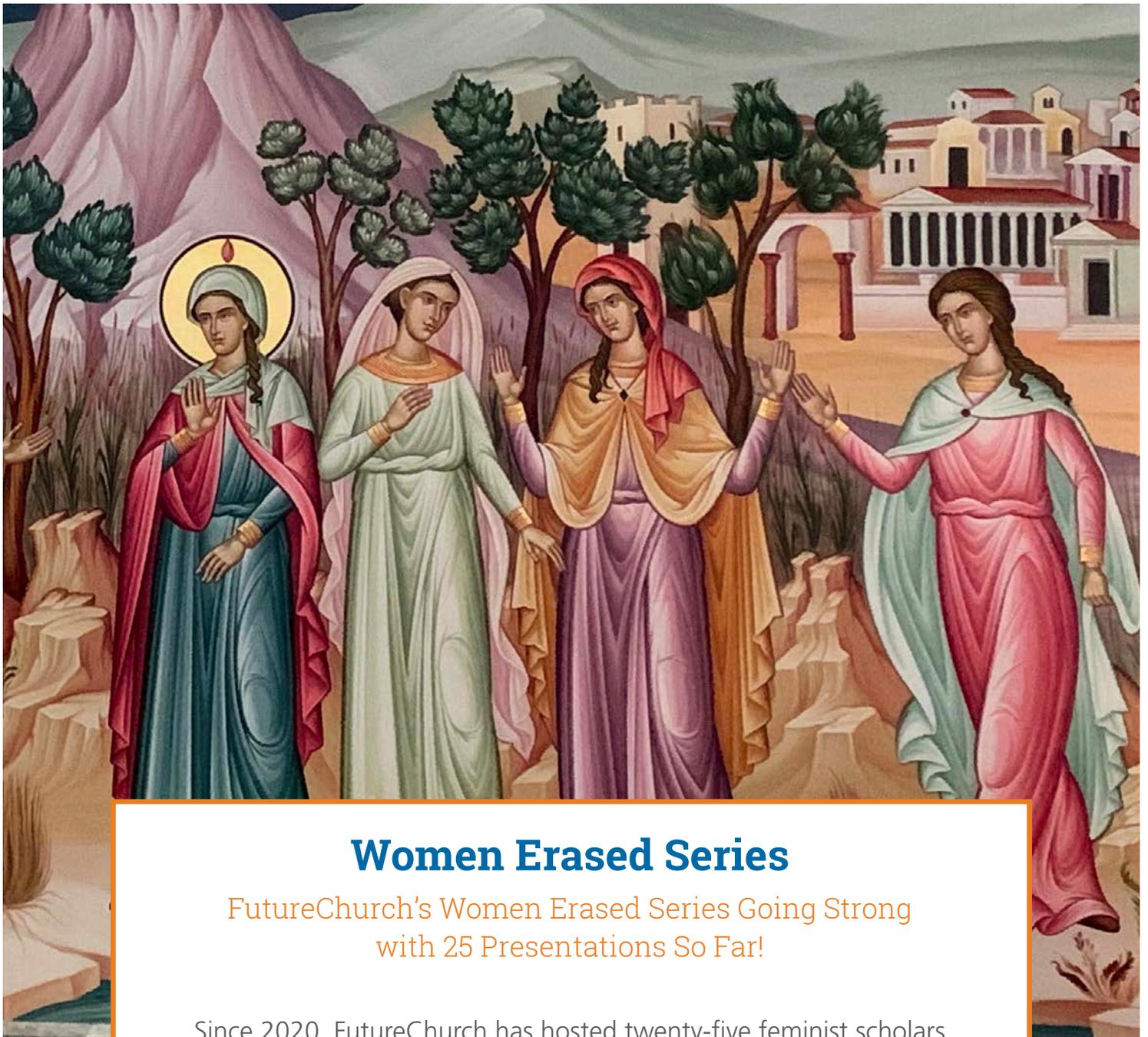
FutureChurch has long advocated for the decoupling of ordination and leadership as one path toward gender equality in the Church and welcomes the appointments. They are one important step in women's steady march toward equality in the Church. And with all gratitude to Pope Francis for making these changes, we acknowledge and celebrate the generations of Catholic women and their allies whose tireless pursuit for equality paved the way for them.

In fact, one of the appointees, Dr. Zervino, herself penned [an open letter to Pope Francis](#) in March 2021, writing "I think that not enough has been done in taking advantage of the wealth of women who make up a large part of God's people." Moreover, she called on him to expand leadership roles for women in the Church: "May the desire expressed by you, that women enter decision-making groups together with men, cease to be considered a utopia and become something common in the Church."

FutureChurch also maintains that while progress is being made, full equality will require the ordination of women and the established presence of women in leadership at every level of the Church.

We realize that bringing more women into these leadership positions is a step in the right direction. Still, we recognize that women receive a call from God to ordained ministry in the Church, and in the spirit of synodality, Pope Francis and all Church leaders should listen to their vocation stories and discern where the Spirit may be calling the Church through them.

Women have always been pastoral and spiritual leaders in their communities, parishes, and families and have increasingly taken up decision-making roles in the Vatican over the last several years. And Pope Francis' recent reform of the Curia opens up even more possibilities. Progress is being made, but FutureChurch will continue to educate, witness, and advocate until the Church is truly the Body of Christ in the world, fully alive with the gifts, wisdom, and vocations of all its members.



## Women Erased Series

FutureChurch's Women Erased Series Going Strong  
with 25 Presentations So Far!

Since 2020, FutureChurch has hosted twenty-five feminist scholars and activists in our [Women Erased series](#). Our scholars help uncover the many ways women's leadership, witness, and ministries have been erased from our Church's Sacred Texts and Lectionary, historical record and memory, and communities. These sessions, featuring leading Scripture scholars and Church historians, not only name and explore the history, but also put forth resources for correcting the record and telling the true story of women's central role in shaping and spreading Christianity from its beginnings to today.

continued on next page...

[Professor Margaret Susan Thompson](#) examined how the history of the Catholic Church in the United States was indelibly shaped by the contributions of sisters – by their work in the parochial school system, their founding and administration of hundreds of hospitals, and their efforts to build a network of charitable organizations. These ministries have transformed the lives of millions of Catholics and the social and humanitarian character of the nation itself. Sisters also have long been advocates for social justice, and unlike most priests, have always provided services not only for Catholics but for the entire population. As laypeople, like most Catholics, sisters have experienced the impact of “engendered power” applied to them by generations of priests and prelates. Thompson’s presentation revealed the history of their resistance and the ways they built a more egalitarian and supportive church and world.

[Professor Joan Taylor and Elizabeth Schrader presented their research](#) on the Meaning of Magdalene based on the literary evidence. Their article, published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in December 2021 examines the Gospel of Luke, Origen, Eusebius, Macarius Magnes, and Jerome, as well as evidence in hagiography, pilgrimage, and diverse literature, reveals multiple ways that the epithet ἡ Μαγδαληνή can be understood and why it is perhaps best left untranslated. Participants learned that while it is common today to refer to Jesus’s disciple Μαρία[μ] ἡ Μαγδαληνή as Mary “of Magdala,” with Magdala identified as a Galilean city named Tarichaea, the earliest Christian sources may point to another way to understand her name. While Mary sometimes was believed to come from a place called “Magdala” or “Magdalene,” Jerome thought that the epithet was a reward for Mary’s faith and actions, not something indicative of provenance: Mary “of the Tower.” In view of the earlier evidence of Origen and Jerome, however, the term ἡ Μαγδαληνή may be based on an underlying Aramaic word meaning “the magnified one” or “tower-ess,” and is therefore best left untranslated.

[Professor Shaily Patel presented a host of evidence](#) showing how women served as leaders in the Early Church. Stories around Jesus included Mary, Mary, Mary and Martha, Co-workers with

Paul such as Junia the Apostle and Phoebe the deacon, women martyrs like Perpetua, Felicity, and Thecla, women prophets who belonged to groups like the Montanists, the presence of the feminine divine in gnostic texts, women who were maligned and silenced by Church Father, monastic women, and more. Professor Patel also shared newly discovered evidence of women’s leadership found in the Ashdod mosaics.



Shaily Patel

[Professor Ross Kraemer explored](#) the question of whether the authorship of Jewish and Christian texts was a “male only” enterprise. Or did Jewish and Christian women also shape the writings that are foundational for Christians today? Since a significant portion of early literature is either anonymous or pseudonymous, past assumptions of male authorship are rightly subject to new lines of feminist inquiry. Professor Kraemer examined a few texts that may have been composed by women and ended the presentation asking participants if and why this mattered in the 21st century.

Stay tuned for more presentations!



To find all the presenters from our Women Erased series go to:  
<https://futurechurch.org/wicl/women-erased/>.

In his NCR piece, Fraga made a short list of Catholic organizations receiving dark money. They included, the Thomas More Society, the Catholic Association Foundation, The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, the Communio Foundation, and more. Donors Trust also gave more than \$182M to anti-abortion groups.

In April, Joshua McElwee, editor at NCR discussed *Praedicate Evangelium* – the new Apostolic Constitution governing the Curia and the changes that are coming as a result. According to McElwee, Francis felt that he was given a mandate by the Cardinals who elected him in 2013 to try and reform the Vatican. The Vatican is a government and has to have rules for how it governs itself and how it interacts with foreign governments and with Catholics around the world. Francis has made it quite clear in this document how he wants this institution to be interacting with Catholics, what goals he wants to be prioritizing and the priorities for the church in this century. Evangelization is his top priority. He wants dialogue with theologians instead of silencing. And Catholic liturgy should follow the renewal taken by the Second Vatican Council.

Prior to the Pope’s journey to Canada, we featured Canadian writer Dr. David Lafferty talking about residential schools in Canada and the Catholic Church’s complicity in abusing indigenous peoples. Although Lafferty was skeptical of the criticism the Church was receiving, as he learned more about the abuse, his position changed and he began to see the Church’s role in a much more critical light.

In January, Christian Wiesner and his wife Renate Holmes joined us to share the Munich Report on clergy sex abuse and the cover up by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI when he was a cardinal in Germany, and the latest response of German Catholics to that report.

Alessandra Harris, who writes for Black Catholic Messenger responded to Archbishop Gomez’s comments about BLM and “pseudo religions.” [She gave a brilliant talk which is published on our news website.](#)



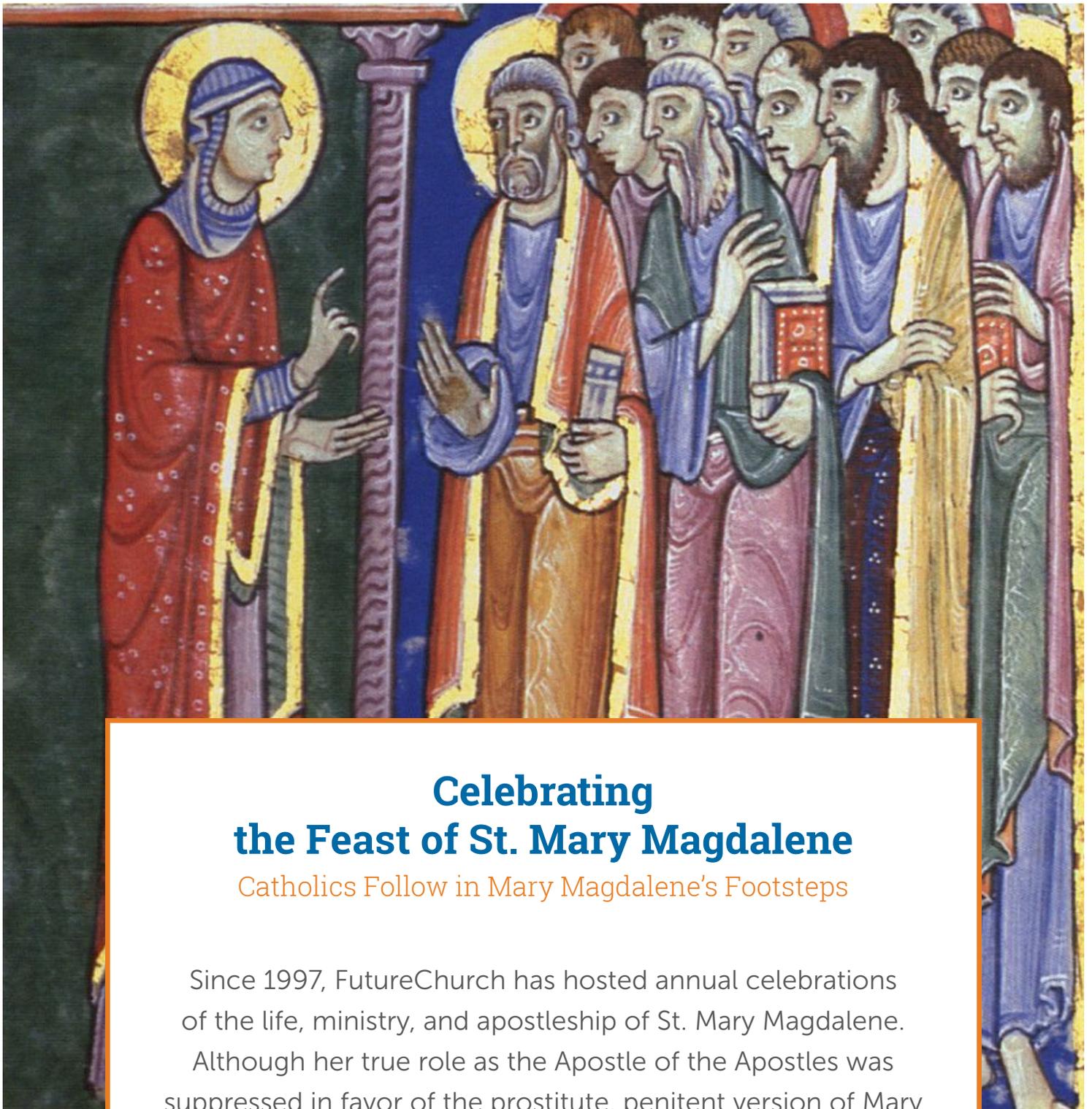
Alessandra Harris

In the past, Christine Schenk, CSJ, spoke on the changes to canon law in light of our work for women deacons; Christian Wiesner (We Are Church Germany) spoke about the synodal path in Germany and Cardinal Marx’s attempted resignation; NCR’s Christopher White talked about the USCCB’s attempts at politicizing/weaponizing the Eucharist; The Tablet’s Christopher Lamb spoke about the controversy over Pope Francis’s new rules on the Latin Mass; and Dr. Steven Millies spoke about ethics and standards in Catholic media after the publication of *The Pillar’s* article on a priest accused of sexual misconduct.



To learn more about our TalkUp Tuesday sessions, go to:

<https://futurechurch.org/talkup-tuesdays>



## **Celebrating the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene**

*Catholics Follow in Mary Magdalene's Footsteps*

Since 1997, FutureChurch has hosted annual celebrations of the life, ministry, and apostleship of St. Mary Magdalene. Although her true role as the Apostle of the Apostles was suppressed in favor of the prostitute, penitent version of Mary Magdalene, she is finally receiving widespread honor and recognition with the 2016 decree raising her memorial to a feast day alongside St. Peter and St. Paul.

continued on next page...

As Catholics recover the authenticity of St. Mary Magdalene's ministry and authority in the Church, we also remember how she stood with Jesus, a victim of brutal state violence in her day.

Thus, this year, recognizing that horrific violence of every kind rages around us, we turned our prayer service focus to the epidemic of gun violence and reflected on how Mary Magdalene's story instructs and inspires us today as we seek to bring about change. FutureChurch board member, Crystal Catalan, beautifully led [the prayer service](#), which asked participants to place themselves with Mary Magdalene and make the journey with her from the cross to Easter morning.

To begin the prayer service, the 400 Catholics who gathered virtually, were invited to intentionally placed themselves with Mary at the foot of the cross as she witnessed Jesus' violent death and remembered those who have been killed in incidents of gun violence in the last year.

We recalled the ten people – all of them Black – who were killed at a Tops supermarket in Buffalo, New York, on July 19, 2022.

We recalled the 19 young elementary school students and 2 teachers killed at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas on May 24, 2022 before police shot and killed the 18-year-old gunman.

We recalled the surgeon and three others shot and killed by a patient who turned the gun on himself at St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 1, 2022.

We recalled the three young girls and their guardian who were killed by their father, who ultimately turned the gun on himself, at The Church in Sacramento, California on February 28, 2022.

We recalled the six people – three women and three men – who were killed when a fight broke out in downtown Sacramento, California in the early morning hours of April 2, 2022.

Then those who gathered placed themselves with Mary in the uncertain time between Crucifixion and Resurrection as those gathered heard the words of Kimberly Rubio, whose daughter Lexi was killed in Ulvade, Texas.

*We do not want you to think of Lexi as just a number. She was intelligent, compassionate, and athletic. She was quiet. Shy, unless she had a point to make. When she knew she was right, as she so often was, she stood her ground. She was firm, direct, voice unwavering. So, today, we stand for Lexi, and, as her voice, we demand action. We seek a ban on assault rifles and high-capacity magazines. We understand that for some reason, to some people, to people with money, to people who fund political campaigns, that guns are more important than children, so at this moment we ask for progress. We seek to raise the age to purchase these weapons from 18 to 21 years of age. We seek red flag laws, stronger background checks. We also want to repeal gun manufacturers liability immunity.*

The gathering also heard the words of X. González, a survivor of the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

*Since the time of the Founding Fathers and since they added the Second Amendment to the Constitution, our guns have developed at a rate that leaves me dizzy. The guns have changed and the laws have not. We certainly do not understand why it should be harder to make plans with friends on weekends than to buy an automatic or semi-automatic weapon. The people in the government who were voted into power are lying to us...They say no laws could have prevented the hundreds of senseless tragedies. We call BS. That us kids don't know what we're talking about, that we're too young to understand how the government works. We call BS. If you agree, register to vote. Contact your local congresspeople. Give them a piece of your mind.*

Both women spoke to those gathered through their grief and trauma in the immediate aftermath of their own experiences of gun violence.

Finally, participants joined Mary as she set out for the tomb on that first Easter morning to discover the Risen One. And through the preaching of Dr. Kimberly Lymore we considered how Christ is calling us to join Mary as bearers of the Good News in a world so desperate for the Gospel today.



## 2022 Mary Magdalene Virtual Art Tour Explores Depictions of Mary in East and West

FutureChurch was once again joined by, Dr. Christine Axen, a medievalist whose research explores the depiction of women in medieval art and the messages that art conveys about social order, for [our third virtual tour of art depicting Mary Magdalene through the ages](#).

The misidentification of Mary as reformed public sinner achieved official standing in a homily delivered by Pope Gregory I (540-604). Henceforth, Mary of Magdala became known in the west, not as the strong woman leader who accompanied Jesus through a tortuous death, first witnessed his Resurrection, and proclaimed the Risen Savior to the early church, but as a wanton woman in need of repentance and a life of hidden (and hopefully silent) penitence. The Eastern church, however, never identified her as a prostitute, and honored her throughout history as “the Apostle to the Apostles.”

Comparing two different homilies - one by Gregory I and one by Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch - and their

cultural contexts, Dr. Axen presentation explored how these disparate treatments influenced artistic representations of Mary Magdalene.

The images from the West matter throughout the history of the church, because, rather than offering Mary Magdalene, and by extension, all women, as apostles, disciples, and ministers, churchmen succeeded in silencing and sidelining women’s gifts and voice in the Church.

Still, thanks to the work and advocacy of FutureChurch and other activists, the Good News of St. Mary Magdalene’s apostleship is officially recognized and opening the doors for women’s gifts, faith, and ministry today.



To learn more about our efforts to “Reclaim Magdalene” go to:

<https://futurechurch.org/wicl/mary-of-magdala/>

# Nearly 1,400 Catholic Schools in the Northeast U.S. Receive the Gift of Mary Magdalene

In time for Easter, Catholic schools throughout the northeast part of the United States received the gift of art – an image of Sr. Margaret (Peggy) Beaudette’s artistic rendering of St. Mary Magdalene as the Apostle to the Apostles – along with educational materials designed for each grade level. Thanks to the generous gift of an anonymous donor, art and materials were sent to 1,387 Catholic schools in New York, New Jersey, Maine, Maryland, Delaware, Connecticut, Washington DC, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Virginia.

For over 2000 years, Christians have depicted the Word of God and our stories of salvation history through art. In every era, artists created images that responded to the currents of their time with images that reflected and reinforced commonly held understandings of faith, along with the major figures Christians sought to emulate. Thus, visual art has had a central role in the evangelization efforts of the Church throughout history.

By focusing on the figure of Mary Magdalene, this initiative, not only recognizes the way art has tragically misrepresented her as a repentant prostitute over the centuries, but, more importantly, seeks to recover her authentic role as “Apostle of the Apostles” and celebrate Pope Francis’s 2016 decree that elevated her memorial to a feast day (July 22). According to his decree, *Apostolorum Apostola*, “St. Mary Magdalene is an example of true and authentic evangelization, that is, an evangelizer who proclaims the joyful central message of Easter.” The message concludes, “For this reason it is right that the liturgical celebration of this woman should have the same rank of Feast as that given to the celebration of the Apostles in the General Roman Calendar and that the special mission of this woman should be underlined, she who is an example and model for all women in the Church.”

For over 20 years FutureChurch has been lifting up Mary Magdalene through our resource materials and annual celebrations. With this new recognition

by the Vatican, FutureChurch seeks to offer art and educational materials that accurately reflect her role in salvation history to Catholics students in grades K – 12, in universities, and in seminaries. In this way, her evangelizing role can be more fully appreciated in the life of the church today.

Commissioned by FutureChurch board member, Rita L. Houlihan, Margaret (Peggy) Beaudette, SC, whose art and teaching inspired thousands of Catholics throughout her lifetime, created the original relief. After much study, prayer, and meditation on the Scripture passages, Sr. Peggy began her design by first rendering the figure of Mary of Magdala followed by the other figures in the scene. She rendered the expressions and postures of the disciples as they received the life-giving news.

Sister Margaret (Peggy) Beaudette (1928 – 2017) received a BA in Art from the College of Mount Saint Vincent and an MFA from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, with a major in sculpture. After years of teaching, in 1987, Sister Peggy began to work full time as a sculptor. Since that time, her work, which includes more than sixty major statues, can be seen across the United States in hospitals, churches, shrines, and places of burial. In addition, she has sculptures in France, Canada, Bermuda, Haiti, and South Korea. Sister Margaret is the recipient of various awards: the J. Dudley Diggs Award for Sculpture, the Mother Teresa Award from the Saint Bernadette Institute of Sacred Art, and the Seton Legacy of Charity Bicentennial Medal, as one whose life emulates the spirit and mission of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, to name a few.

Sister Peggy once said, “My sculpture was the best way I could express that God, evercompassionate and kind, is incarnated in the figures I sculpt.”

Each of the nearly 1,400 schools received a canvas of Sr. Peggy’s art “St. Mary Magdalene, Apostle of the Apostles,” educational materials for teachers along with age appropriate materials for



Margaret (Peggy) Beaudette, SC

My sculpture  
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and kind,  
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sculpt.

**- Margaret (Peggy)  
Beaudette, SC**

each grade level. Each school also received a feedback form.

Of all the forms received, 98% strongly agreed or agreed that the materials were helpful, well designed, and easy to use. A few teachers offered comments on ways to improve the educational materials for their grade level. Most expressed their gratitude:

*Thank you for these beautiful materials!*

*We displayed the artwork in the hallway and our principal brought it around to all the classrooms.*

*The eighth-grade class shared the story with the younger students of our school thereby serving as apostles and evangelists to the entire school. We are planning to share this art and story with the residents of the Saint Vincent de Paul Archcare Residence next year.*

*This was a beautiful surprise and a wonderful way to celebrate women's roles in Scripture.*

*We hung this beautiful piece of art in our school foyer.*

*My fifth-graders loved learning about St. Mary Magdalene and the materials were interesting.*

*Sr. Mary Magdalene taught for years at our school. This is why this art and the lessons were even more important to our students.*

*Thank you for the wonderful gift and lessons! This was displayed at our art walk in our hallway so the children will be able to see it all the time.*

*This was a tribute to the call of St. Mary Magdalene, but also the call of God's gifts we all receive.*

*It would be wonderful to have a children's book to read on St. Mary Magdalene. I'm not sure if there are any, but this would be wonderful, along with included art work. My students loved the art from this unit, and enjoyed hearing about Sr. Peggy. Thank you!*

With this project, students of all ages are learning about Mary Magdalene's courage and her leadership as the first witness to the resurrection joyfully announcing the Good News to the apostles, disciples, and friends of Jesus. Her apostleship, discipleship, gifts, faith, and love for Jesus will be remembered and honored by all.



## Bread Not Stones: Catholics Witness at U.S. Bishops' Conference in Baltimore

In November 2021, [FutureChurch joined other Catholics in Baltimore](#) as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops met to discuss whether to officially deny Holy Communion to high profile Catholics who support choice and equal treatment of LGBTQ+ people under the law.

Under the campaign, "Bread Not Stones" FutureChurch and several other organizations who are members of [Catholic Organizations for Renewal](#) gathered, prayed, and marched, urging bishops to move away from overidentifying with one political party and increasing the polarization in the Church. Further, the gathered Catholics called on bishops to enter more authentically into their roles as pastors.

"We are here today standing for all the Catholics, the vast majority of Catholics, who cherish the Eucharist and who do not want to see this central sacrament of our church weaponized for culture war purposes," said Marianne Duddy-Burke,

executive director of DignityUSA, during the witness.

While Pope Francis has holistically called Catholics to stand against all forms of violence and poverty, the U.S. bishops have chosen to ignore his guidance and example. While they exhort voters to take a stand against one issue – abortion – they, in effect, ignore issues Pope Francis calls "equally important" such as gun violence, climate change, racism, poverty, and gender-based violence, as well as other forms of violence.

Although the bishops averted a disastrous turn toward partisanship at their November assembly, their funding of a Eucharistic Revival will likely serve a similar purpose in the long run.

[FutureChurch will continue to speak up for a church that is inclusive, just, and Gospel-oriented.](#)



## FutureChurch gatherings build and grow community online.

In the Spring of 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced the world inside and online, FutureChurch responded by initiating a twice-weekly online Liturgy of the Word and Faith Sharing for like-minded Catholics to come together for worship, support, and conversation.

As vaccinations became more readily available and parish communities began to meet together, though, participants in the gatherings indicated a strong desire to keep meeting. These liturgies didn't just "see" participants through the worst of the pandemic, they created a new community - a community that had become an important part of the lives of everyone in it.

And so, while the liturgies have been scaled back to just once per week on Sunday nights at 7pm ET, the community continues to assemble and worship together, supporting each other, celebrating life's ups, and grieving life's downs together. FutureChurch Co-Director Russ and Petrus and

board member Vickey McBride alternate leading live music. And members of the community volunteer to lead and read. The 25 minutes of sharing and conversation following the readings and preaching remain a staple of the gathering. [All are welcome to join these weekly liturgies!](#)

Our 2020 Greece Pilgrims, who returned home from Greece at the very beginning of the pandemic, continue to meet monthly. These gatherings began the first Thursday after returning home so pilgrims could check in and report on their health and well-being. In the years since, the community that had just started to blossom during our travels around Greece continues to bloom and bear fruit with pilgrims attending events together, supporting one another's endeavors and successes, and even arranging travel plans to visit each other.

# TalkUP Tuesdays Offer Catholics an Opportunity to Discuss Breaking Developments in the Church

FutureChurch launched a new series last year to give Catholics who are concerned or curious about breaking news in the Catholic Church a space to learn more and dialogue. Since our launch, we have hosted well known figures like Marie Collins, who sat on the Commission for the Protection of Children, and who is a strong critic of Pope Francis' policies on holding abusers and clerics who cover up accountable.

In August 16, 2022, National Catholic Reporter's Christopher White talked about his experience traveling to Canada with Pope Francis as he embarked on a penitential pilgrimage apologizing to indigenous victims of Catholic residential schools. For White, the Pope took meaningful action that brought healing to indigenous Catholics offering a model for authentic reform and reparations for the future.



Fordham University's David Gibson

In July, Fordham University's David Gibson offered his perspective about the state of Catholic media and the USCCB's decision to defund Catholic News Service (CNS). He began with the degradation of media outlets in general and especially at the local and regional level. But, [as in his NCR article](#), he explained how shuttering CNS, which was funded by the USCCB, eliminates a "rare source of credibility" for the hierarchy. He also noted that closing down the domestic operations of CNS will have a terrible practical effect because diocesan newspapers and websites across the country depend on CNS content to fill out their page with

news about the church in other dioceses and around the world.



National Catholic Reporter's Brian Fraga

In June, National Catholic Reporter journalist, Brian Fraga, spoke at length about dark money in the Catholic Church and how that flow affects the wider political landscape in the United States in very negative ways. Using a powerpoint presentation to help simplify the complexities involved, he explained how the organization, Donors Trust, described as a "dark money ATM" for the political right has provided funding to groups linked to white supremacist and anti-democratic elements, was at the center of the misinformation campaign that spread lies about the 2020 presidential election and organized the Jan. 6, 2021, attack at the U.S. Capitol.

Donor Trust's 990 tax return for 2020 details the network of right-wing groups that received hefty donations: Tea Party Patriots Foundation, Turning Point USA, American Enterprise Institute, the Federalist Society, the Second Amendment Foundation, the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation, and more. But even more troubling is the funding it offers right-wing Catholic nonprofits and official Catholic groups. Traditionalist Catholic parishes, dioceses headed by conservative bishops like Bishop Thomas Daly, pro-life organizations, religious liberty law firms, a free-market think tank, and academic groups at Catholic colleges that advocate libertarianism and constitutional originalism all get big sums.

# The Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph

wish to recognize and thank

## FutureChurch

for helping us to “be Church” for the past 32 years.

We are grateful for and support your efforts around building a synodal church to ensure all Catholics have the opportunity to fully participate in Church life and leadership.

## Congratulations

Yunuen Trujillo

recipient of the Sister Christine Schenk, CSJ, Award for Young Adults

Sister Maureen Sullivan, OP

recipient of the Louis J. Trivison Award



To learn more about our justice work, visit us at  
[CSJoseph.org/Social-Justice](https://CSJoseph.org/Social-Justice)



**SYNODALITY:**

**WE'VE BEEN WALKING TOGETHER SINCE 1975.**

**#LETHEVOICECARRY**



**WOMENSORDINATION.ORG  
#ORDAINWOMEN**

**Women's Ordination Conference** is a grassroots-driven movement that promotes activism, dialogue, and prayerful witness to call for women's full equality and ordination in a renewed Church.

**TEXT ORDAINWOMEN TO 44321 TO DONATE**



## Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference

Congratulations FutureChurch for your 32 years of working to provide all Roman Catholics the opportunity to participate fully in the life of the Church. May you have many more years of continued dedication!

**SEPAWOC**

*We are women and men rooted in faith, dedicated to obtaining justice, equality, and full partnership in ministry. We are committed to church renewal and to the transformation of a structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry.*



SEPAWOC  
P.O. Box 52046  
Philadelphia, PA 19115

[www.sepawoc.org](http://www.sepawoc.org)

LGBTQIA+ Catholics, allies and family members:  
Join our NEW  
Northeast Ohio chapter for affirming liturgy and community!



Meetings starting now—email [neohio@dignityusa.org](mailto:neohio@dignityusa.org) for location and information.

Visit our **DIGNITY/NE OH** Facebook page to connect with our community.

Visit [dignityusa.org](http://dignityusa.org) for more information about DignityUSA chapters and affiliation groups.



Honors and Thanks

**Rafael Luciani, STD**  
**Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP**  
**Yunuen Trujillo\***

for their insightful and compassionate work  
in building a more synodal church

Keep in touch with how Catholics are building  
a more inclusive church for LGBTQ people

\* Read some of Yunuen Trujillo's thoughts  
on LGBTQ ministry:  
<https://www.NewWaysMinistry.org/author/yunuen-trujillo/>

[www.NewWaysMinistry.org](http://www.NewWaysMinistry.org)  
phone: 301-277-5674  
email: [info@NewWaysMinistry.org](mailto:info@NewWaysMinistry.org)

Congratulations to the 2022 award honorees

Maureen Sullivan, OP and  
Yunuen Trujillo

-The Sisters of the Humility of Mary



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humilityofmary.org

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*FutureChurch,  
Thank you for engaging at the  
intersection of faith and public life!*



# Quixote Center

Promoting Justice  
Seeking Peace



**301-669-0042**

[info@quixote.org](mailto:info@quixote.org)

[www.quixote.org](http://www.quixote.org)

The Quixote Center empowers vulnerable families and communities to become the artisans of their own destiny through transforming oppressive systems and structures. Inspired by liberation theology and Catholic Social Teaching, we do this through sustainable development, advocacy, economic justice, environmental, and educational initiatives. Our current focus is on Nicaragua and Haiti, where we support programs to empower impoverished families and communities, and support for migrants in Mexico and Central America, where we work to mitigate the damage of US immigration policies. Together with our partners, we dream of a world more justly loving.

## InterReligious Task Force on Central America

Join with us to bolster the international solidarity movement—standing with marginalized and vulnerable communities in Latin America, at our border, in immigration detention facilities, in county jails and state prisons, and on the streets of Cleveland.

All people—everywhere—deserve dignity, care, and safe communities.

## **SOLIDARITY**

Our liberation is bound together



[IRTFcleveland.org](http://IRTFcleveland.org)  
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**Women  
religious are  
BOLD,  
committed  
agents  
of change.**

SCAN THIS CODE TO  
HEAR THEIR STORIES!



**GLOBAL SISTERS** REPORT

*A project of National Catholic Reporter*

# STAY CONNECTED ALL YEAR



<https://futurechurch.org>

FutureChurch's home on the world wide web. Register for events, explore our resources, and join our latest efforts.



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FutureChurch's comprehensive video archive. Like and subscribe to our YouTube page to get alerts whenever we post a new video.



<https://futurechurch.org/shop>

FutureChurch's online store with posters and cards.



[www.futurechurchnews.org](http://www.futurechurchnews.org)

Get the latest news and our unique perspective - at home and abroad - at FutureChurch's news site.



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Like FutureChurch on Facebook, connect with other FutureChurch members and supporters, and get real-time commentary on breaking news.



@FutureChurchUSA

Follow FutureChurch on twitter, learn about breaking news, and get our live reactions from events and programs that FutureChurch is at and a part of.

## Other FutureChurch Sites

[www.catholicwomendeacons.org](http://www.catholicwomendeacons.org)

dedicated to restoring women deacons

[www.catholicwomenpreach.org](http://www.catholicwomenpreach.org)

video and text of women preaching on the weekly scriptures

[www.reclaimmagdalene.org](http://www.reclaimmagdalene.org)

dedicated to telling the true story of Mary of Magdala



3909 Rocky River Drive  
Cleveland, OH 44111

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