



36TH ANNUAL FALL EVENT · NIGHT TWO · AWARDS CEREMONY

Catholics for the Common Good

What Is Ours to Do?

Transcript · Tuesday, October 27, 2026 · Via Zoom

Speakers

SPEAKER	ROLE	AFFILIATION
Joanna Arellano-Gonzalez	Trivison Award recipient	Co-founder and Director of Training and Formation, Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership
Lauryn Sweeney	Schenk Award recipient	Co-founder, Catholic Women Speak at Fordham University
AnnaMarie Pacione	Schenk Award recipient	Co-founder, Catholic Women Speak at Fordham University
Mollie Clark	Schenk Award recipient	Co-founder, Catholic Women Speak at Fordham University
Russ Petrus	Host; presenter	Executive Director, FutureChurch
Vickey McBride	Welcome; opening prayer	Chair, FutureChurch board
Martha Ligas	Presenter	Director of Community Engagement, FutureChurch
Olivia Hastie	Moderator, conversation	Digital Communications Manager, FutureChurch
Marie Graf	Closing prayer	Secretary, FutureChurch board
Rita Houlihan	Question	FutureChurch board member
Sister Christine Schenk, CSJ	Question	FutureChurch founding executive director

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability. Filler words, false starts and repetitions have been removed; the substance of each speaker's remarks is unchanged.

Welcome

VICKEY MCBRIDE Well, good evening, everyone. My name is Vickey McBride, and I have the joy of serving as the chairperson of the FutureChurch board. On behalf of all of us, welcome back to our 36th Annual Fall Event, *Catholics for the Common Good: What Is Ours to Do?* And thank you so much for being here.

As we gather for our awards ceremony, and as All Saints and All Souls Days draw near, we begin by giving thanks for the saints, living and deceased, who have answered the question we asked on Night One: *What is ours to do?*

Tonight's awards carry the names of two of them: our co-founder, Father Louis Trivison, and our founding director, Sister Christine Schenk. We also give thanks for our founding and supporting parishes, our volunteers, board and committee members, liturgy leaders, presenters, and the many women who preach for Catholic Women Preach.

And we are so grateful to all of you. You, along with our sponsors, partners, and advertisers, make this event and all of our work together possible. We invite you to view the advertisements in our program book and learn more about the missions of our friends and partner organizations.

Finally, I extend our deepest gratitude and warmest welcome to our awardees tonight: Joanna Arellano-Gonzalez, Mollie Clark, AnnaMarie Pacione, and Lauryn Sweeney. Each of you has and continues to answer the question, "What is yours to do?" FutureChurch is proud to call you a friend and partner, and we are excited to celebrate you tonight.

Opening Prayer

VICKEY MCBRIDE And now, let us take a moment to remind ourselves that we are now and always in the presence of our good and loving God.

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, O God, that in every generation you raise up saints, prophets, and truth tellers.

They call us, as Church and as society, to conversation and reconciliation, to conversion and restoration.

You have given their witness and words power, power to move us: from self-interest to the common good, from inequality to equal dignity, from exclusion to belonging, from despair to hope, from fear to courage, and from death to new life.

Make us attentive to the challenges they pose and the dreams they dare. Help us discern what is ours to do, the gifts we bring and the obstacles in our way. And open our hearts and imaginations to love a new Church, a new world, into being.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sister Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders

MARTHA LIGAS Thank you, Vickey, for the warm welcome and for centering us in prayer. My name is Martha Ligas, and I'm the Director of Community Engagement for FutureChurch. And it is my pleasure to present this year's Sister Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders.

Named in honor of FutureChurch's founding executive director, this award is given to a young Catholic, or Catholics, 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.

Tonight, we are honored to present our 2026 Christine Schenk Award to Mollie Clark, AnnaMarie Pacione, and Lauryn Sweeney.

As students, this team of three young women spearheaded the founding and development of an annual Catholic Women Speak conference at Fordham University. Through their hard work, their passion, and their courage, since they began in 2024, the conference has reached more than 250 individuals. Not only did these women begin the work, but they also recruited new student leaders to continue managing the conference after they graduated.

Lauryn, who graduated in 2026, is currently enrolled in the University of Notre Dame's ACE program, teaching middle school religion at St. Anthony Catholic School in Robstown, Texas. AnnaMarie and Mollie both graduated this past spring and are part of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Mollie is working with Catholic Charities' Nutritional Development Services agency in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. And AnnaMarie is in Los Angeles, California, working as a community organizing intern at UNITE HERE Local 11, which represents hospitality workers fighting for more just working and living conditions.

Personally, having led a workshop at this year's conference and seeing these women lead firsthand, I cannot speak more highly of their contributions to our faith community. I was truly in awe of the way the Spirit moved through these young women. From recruitment and advertising to facilitating Conversations in the Spirit and leading worship, these remarkable women led each element of the conference with maturity and with grace. Their poise, their passion, and their depth of theological insight far exceed their years. They are the leaders that our Church needs.

And so, Mollie, AnnaMarie, and Lauryn, we are honored to present you with our 2026 Sister Christine Schenk Award, in recognition of your founding of the Catholic Women Speak conference at Fordham University, and for ensuring its future by recruiting and forming the next generation of student leaders to carry the work forward.

So please join me in congratulating Mollie, AnnaMarie, and Lauryn.

So I'll now pass things over to our award winners to share a little bit and to speak on their award.

Acceptance Remarks: Lauryn Sweeney, AnnaMarie Pacione, and Mollie Clark

LAURYN SWEENEY Thank you, FutureChurch, so much for this. And I will speak for all of us in saying we are so honored. We are so excited, because we have been so inspired by your work. Reading Catholic Women Preach throughout college, and just seeing the example you have set before us, has allowed us to do what we have done and hopefully will continue to do.

With this, I want to spend a little bit of time just talking about how Mollie, Anna, and I met each other. And then how we're going to spend the next few minutes is talking about each other and ourselves and what we're proud of.

I think it is so incredibly special to receive this award together, because our work with Catholic Women Speak was truly communal, and the most Spirit-filled experience I've had in my life: seeing how relational it was, not transactional, just a continual, life-giving experience working with Anna and Mollie and Carol Gibney, who is our campus minister at Fordham, and who really worked to empower us and gave us the platform to do what we were able to do with Catholic Women Speak. So first, a big thank you to Carol for organizing.

So now I want to talk about Anna and Mollie. Anna and Mollie and I met in Campus Ministry at Fordham. In their sophomore year, my junior year, they had the opportunity, with the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham, to attend the Synod as part of the delegation that was able to go to Rome. I was not part of that delegation, but I always looked to them as so inspiring, because they were very mission-driven, knowing that it wasn't about what they did in Rome, but how they brought it back to Fordham. It was always about: What do you do when you come back?

And that's really where the seeds of our conference started. How do you take what you're learning in classes? Specifically, one class we took our sophomore year, Liturgy That Does Justice, was about how you connect faith to life. How does the liturgy send us out? You are sent to do justice in the world. So bringing together what we learned in the synod process, and that class, and our own spiritual journeys was really special. And to have spiritual kin to do that with, in Anna and Mollie, was a true gift.

I want to share just one story about each of them in the Catholic Women Speak conference planning process, and I'll start with Mollie, because I think it speaks to the beautiful creative spirit that she is. Two powerful moments for me with Mollie were seeing her read her own poem-prayer, "We Are Holy in Our Time," in front of the conference. The poem opens with a beautiful line about the Spirit finding us in our inadequacies. And I'll always remember that line, because her humility shines through, but also true confidence. True confidence, and her ability to bring people together through her creative spirit, was incredible.

And Mollie is a beautiful vocalist. She loves music and was a musical leader during our time at Fordham. So to see her lead during the Mass in 2024 and the communion services in 2025 and 2026, after leading a whole-day conference, then going straight to leading a choir, was truly inspiring and incredible to watch.

And then, Anna is a fiery, fiery spirit, and she pushes me to go further: watching her navigate internal relations at Fordham to really fight for what she was passionate about, to get this conference off the ground. Specifically, in 2025, she felt so convicted that we should not do a Mass after the conference, but a communion service, for the symbolic reasons of being woman-led and being student-led. And she was always pushing for more intersectionality in our conference over the years. Anna really brought those voices into our meetings, into the room.

And as we were setting up the chapel for our communion service in 2025, we were talking about how to make the space more circular, as a way of supporting one another. And we came to the presider's chair. What do you do with the presider's chair? And I thought, like, someone should sit there, because it's the bigger chair. And I will never forget that Anna said no: every person will sit in the same type of chair as everybody else.

And it was a moment where I just stepped back and thought, I am so grateful to work with this incredible person, who is so grounded in what's important and is not going to repeat anything, but wants to truly imagine something new.

So Mollie, Anna, thank you. Congratulations. And I will pass it off to AnnaMarie.

ANNAMARIE PACIONE Thank you, Lauryn. When I think about how to honor and how to reverence Lauryn and Mollie, I'm overwhelmed. My words will fall short. But when I was praying about what stories and moments to bring to this space, I was presented with two memories that kind of bookended our time co-creating and laboring with this conference.

To start with Lauryn: as she mentioned, our Liturgy That Does Justice class. Lauryn was planning to write her final paper on women deacons. So toward the end of the semester, our professor, Father Scirghi, who's with us here, was pressing Lauryn on her research and what she wanted to share. And as he continued to press her, she said, with such conviction and such perfect articulation, that there is an absence of right relationship as long as women are not preaching from the pulpit.

And everyone in the room kind of leaned in, drawn in by her wisdom. And after she finished talking, everyone started clapping. It was one of the most magical moments I had experienced in a classroom. And why I think of that moment so often, and share it now, is because Lauryn was one of the first people to really wake me up to the injustices in our tradition and to mobilize me. I looked at Lauryn and I saw someone who I wanted to be my faith leader, who I wanted to be my priest, who I wanted to lead me in prayer and to lead my community, to be my teacher. And what we did together was an opportunity to be led by Lauryn.

She brought a special spirit of groundedness and of careful discernment to our organizing, and she always lifted up the women who walked before us, reminding us to look to them for

counsel. And she often prompted us to turn to prayer with humility. She'd take a deep breath and begin by saying, "Thank you, God." Thank you, Lauryn.

And now to Mollie. Anyone who has encountered Mollie knows that she listens to you like you're the only person in the room. She grabs her chest and nods her head. It's the physical embodiment of her deep listening, of the way that she receives stories and lives to honor them. Through Catholic Women Speak, Mollie courageously centered our responsibility to create a space where everybody is welcome and where nobody is excluded.

Mollie led, as Lauryn mentioned, our music. And this past conference, she closed our communion meditation with a song. I'm going to sing it briefly, because its words are meant to be sung, but I'm not as good as Mollie.

AnnaMarie sings a brief excerpt of the song.

And I share that because it not only encompasses the spirit of our gathering, it encompasses the spirit of Mollie. She sang it with such courage and power and truth, and looked at everybody, expressing to them that they are encountered and celebrated there.

And so I pass it to you now, Mollie.

MOLLIE CLARK Thank you both. You are such gifts in my life.

When I think of Lauryn, I think of one of Jesus's many resurrection appearances, in the Gospel of John, when he invites his disciples and says, "Come, have breakfast." I think of the way that Lauryn is that person for us. She is always accompanying us. She's nourishing us in body, mind, and spirit.

When she came back to Fordham this past spring to assist us with our third annual Catholic Women Speak conference, she made sure we were fed. She made sure we were listened to, and she made sure we were empowered, in every act and word over the weekend. She was so gentle with our hearts, with our anxieties. She listened so deeply, and she carried us through that weekend. We truly could not have done it without her, just as we couldn't have done it without her in the first place. She breathes joy and life into everything she does, and it is such a privilege to know and to love you, Lauryn. Thank you.

And AnnaMarie, there are so many things I could say and have said. I am continually resting in awe of your courageous heart, of your radical love, of your desire to follow God's invitations for your life, even when they are hard, when they are confusing. When most people would say, "That's too much, that's too scary, I'm not strong enough," you say, "If you're leading me, God, I'm with you. I'm there." And that inspires me further than you will ever know. And your desire for more love and more inclusion and more mutuality in all of our relationships has been such an inspiration to me.

I think about the three of us playing church, preparing for the conference, the theology conversations on our couches, the way that every day was holy with you. Thank you, thank you, AnnaMarie.

And as the three of us were preparing our remarks for this incredible privilege and this amazing evening, we thought about the incredible feminist theologians who have walked before us, and their essential work in dissecting what it means to be a feminine-identifying person, however that may look or present. When we think of the seven deadly sins, some may think of pride. But many theologians and thinkers, such as Valerie Saiving and others, have pointed to self-abnegation and excessive self-deprecation as a sin. And because of that, as we empower one another by lifting each other up, we also wanted to take a moment to state what we are proud of within ourselves.

I will say for myself: my relationships with Lauryn and AnnaMarie have brought me so much courage in my own life. I am so proud of the strength that I have learned from them, and the strength that I carry with me after my time at Fordham. Thank you, AnnaMarie. Thank you, Lauryn.

LAURYN SWEENEY I am proud of how I helped create a community that I was seeking but didn't quite know I was seeking, and I'm proud that that community has sustained me in my work today. I am an associate with the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I see many Presentation people on this call, and their witness to justice and human dignity has made me so proud to be part of that charism.

And in my work as a middle school teacher, every day I teach middle school religion and history. I think of the words of the women at Catholic Women Speak, one being Namulundah Florence in 2025. She said, "Our job is to retrieve, document, and transmit the whole story," which has become the mantra for my eighth-grade U.S. history class this year: retrieve, document, transmit the whole story.

And I am proud of my classroom being a sacred space. Maureen O'Connell talked about that at the 2025 Catholic Women Speak conference: that, sure, we don't get to be up in the pulpit every weekend, but women have always been speaking. Women speak in the classroom. And to now have my own sacred space in the classroom is something I'm really, really proud of.

ANNAMARIE PACIONE And I'm proud that each year brought healing and confidence and love to people of different spiritualities and evolutions, whether it was our fellow students, our neighbors in the Belmont community, middle schoolers, our presenters and speakers, our elders. And even last year, there was someone who was just in the area, looking for a place to go to church, who had not been with a faith community in decades and somehow came across us.

I am proud of the co-creators of this year's conference, Erin, Gloria, Maddie, Emma, and Michelina, for being open to be workers for what the Spirit presents to them.

And the moment I'm most proud of: we would end our liturgies with a communal blessing to each other, saying, "I bless you. I need you. The world needs you. God needs you. This is your place in the Church." And at the end, when we would do that, people would be hugging, and there were some leaky eyes. I didn't feel proud because of what we had done. I felt proud to be in a room in the presence of such beloved kin, in a presence where love flowed so freely.

So I'm proud to be celebrated and embraced, and to celebrate and embrace. So a big thank you to FutureChurch, and to all who have gathered with us and encouraged us. Thank you, and peace to all of you.

RUSS PETRUS I just have to take a big, huge, deep breath after that.

You three model what is best in us as a Church: care, compassion, fellowship, communion, just a deep love for each other. It's so moving to witness that, and it's so moving to be in the presence of that. And I feel it, even in this virtual space.

Thank you. Thank you for what you have shared, for what you have done for our Church, for what you have done for this gathering tonight, for our hearts and our spirits, and for what you have done for the future, for students and women at Fordham, and, I hope, at other colleges and universities around the country to come. Congratulations. You are so deserving of this award, and we couldn't be more proud.

Father Louis J. Trivison Award

RUSS PETRUS Well, hello again, everyone. It's me, Russ. I'm back. It's really wonderful to gather with you again tonight. I have the extraordinary joy, and I'm thrilled, to be presenting this year's Father Louis J. Trivison Award.

This award is named in memory of FutureChurch co-founder Father Louis Trivison. It honors a Roman Catholic who shows outstanding leadership in advancing FutureChurch's Vatican II mission and vision, whether that's in teaching, administration, research, publication, advocacy, or pastoral care.

And tonight, we're honored to present the 2026 Father Louis J. Trivison Award to Joanna Arellano-Gonzalez.

Joanna is a proud first-generation Mexican American from the Little Village neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. She is a co-founder of the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership, and she currently serves as its Director of Training and Formation.

Now, you might know CSPL, because when migrants in detention were being treated utterly inhumanely, CSPL led Eucharistic processions to those detention facilities in Chicago. Those processions drew national press attention, both secular and Catholic press. And from where I sit, they helped move the U.S. bishops, who until then, in my opinion, had been conspicuously quiet, to finally speak out against this most cruel and unjust miscarriage of justice.

I first met Joanna in the summer of 2023. A mutual friend at Catholic Theological Union introduced us so that Joanna could preach for Catholic Women Preach. And now that I think about it, I owe that person a note, because I'm so glad that they did. Watching Joanna's work with CSPL over these many heartbreaking years has been a real source of hope and an inspiration for me personally.

She's now preached for us three times, and I have to say that I think each homily has been more inspired, and more inspiring, than the last. And I thought I would include some of her own words as a way of introducing her.

In 2023, preaching on the Parable of the Sower, Joanna told us that, as collaborators with God, "we are meant to be out in the world organizing for equality, helping one another, innovating tradition."

Last Advent, preaching on Joseph's dream, she urged us: "When God inspires you to divine action and holy resistance, heed your dreams."

And this summer, after sharing with me her special devotion to Mary Magdalene, she preached on Mary's feast day. And she said, "To dismiss the witness and leadership of women is to ignore the example Jesus gave us. To disregard the messenger is to disregard the One who sent her."

In her preaching, her writing, and her advocacy, Joanna is never afraid to clearly name the ills that plague not only our society, but also our Church. She speaks prophetically, in a way that I can only describe as "ordained by God," and with a kind of authority that only comes from personal experience and deep conviction.

Joanna, to echo your Mary Magdalene homily: we are so grateful not only for the message, but for the messenger, and of course for the One who sent you.

There's something else that I want you all to know about Joanna, and that's that she never reaches for the limelight. She always shares the credit, and sometimes even deflects it. Again and again and again, she uses her gifts, her position, and the resources at her disposal to uplift and amplify others, especially women and others who are vulnerable.

Since meeting Joanna, I've been known to describe her as "the real deal." And, if you'll pardon the language, on more than one occasion I have described her preaching as... badass.

So, Joanna, with so much gratitude and affection, FutureChurch is honored to present you with our 2026 Father Louis J. Trivison Award. We recognize your founding leadership of the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership, and your unwavering commitment to justice, both in the world and within our Church.

So, everyone, please join me in congratulating our friend, Joanna!

Unfortunately, Joanna is not able to be with us tonight, but she has a really good excuse. She is actually in Rome tonight with a Catholic delegation from Chicago, and she's meeting with Pope Leo and other Vatican dicasteries to continue her advocacy for migrants. Frankly, it's the most Joanna reason I can think of for her to miss her own award presentation. But she did prepare a video for us tonight. It's amazing, and I'm excited to share it with all of you. So give me just a moment to transition, and we'll get that up on the screen.

Sorry, friends, I forgot to optimize for video. Give me just one moment. It's been a while since I've done this.

Acceptance Remarks: Joanna Arellano-Gonzalez

Joanna's remarks were shared by video.

JOANNA ARELLANO-GONZALEZ Words cannot fully express how grateful I am to FutureChurch for receiving this year's Louis J. Trivison Award. I'm deeply, deeply humbled by this recognition, and I see it as an affirmation of the collective work through the Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership.

I also want to congratulate Mollie Clark, AnnaMarie Pacione, and Lauryn Sweeney for receiving the Christine Schenk Award for Young Catholic Leaders. I read about the efforts you all are engaged in, and you give me so much hope for the future of the Church. Thank you, thank you, thank you for the work that you're doing.

I have long admired the work of FutureChurch. I first learned about your organization about ten years ago, when someone handed me a packet titled "Women Deacons: Why Not Now?" And it opened up my world. It opened my world to learning about the pivotal role that women have played in shaping our Church since the very beginning.

And strangely, none of it felt entirely new to me. I think deep down, I had always known that women were central to the life of the Church because of the women who surrounded me. In my parish, it was the señoras who were the movers and shakers. In my home neighborhood of Little Village, it was the señoras and the young women organizing our blocks, setting up mutual aid efforts, and showing up for our neighbors.

Growing up, it was my mom who taught me about justice from a very young age. My mom worked as a public school cafeteria worker, and she was often overlooked as an immigrant woman without a formal education. And even after 25 years of service and dedication, she remained in a minimum-wage job.

But at home, in our parish, in her union, and throughout our community, my mom was a firecracker. She had a way of lighting up the room, and when something wasn't right, you just knew it. She wasn't quiet, and she didn't wait for permission to speak. She made a lot of noise, and she challenged people. She set things in motion. And, like a firecracker, she would regularly make little booms.

She spoke up at union events, pushed me to raise my voice at protests, helped lead events at our parish, and worked tirelessly to help me and my three sisters excel in school. She believed education was one of the few pathways available to help us get ahead as women. She taught us through her words, but even more through the way that she lived.

I have this vivid memory of my mom from 2013. I was working in a diocesan office and lamenting to her about what I was seeing and experiencing, things that felt so contrary to what the Church should be doing. And I told her that if I just prayed hard enough, things would change for the better. And that's when my mother's voice just roared. And she said, "Joanna, God gave you a voice so that you could use it. Now pray and ask God for the courage to say something."

And her firecracker energy ignited something in me. She helped me to understand that prayer and speaking up could go hand in hand. I began to take greater responsibility for naming the injustices I witnessed and challenging the things I knew were wrong. I also began to understand how using our voices can create space for others to do the same.

That lesson continues to shape my life and my work. I think about my mom and the many women who have been unapologetically bold and prophetic in my life, even when the world around them dismissed them or underestimated them. And so much of what I do today comes from the example they set and the courage they helped cultivate in me.

At CSPL, we try to create those same opportunities for others to discover their voices in leadership, and our work takes many forms. We continue to organize for pastoral access for our detained sisters and brothers at the Broadview ICE facility, and encourage the same with ministers and organizers across the country. We remain involved in litigation as we seek to ensure that our legal agreement for daily pastoral access at Broadview is permanent. And we currently have a team of about 70 ministers who rotate and go inside every day to accompany our sisters and brothers, hear their stories, share the sacraments, and support them in a time that is deeply traumatic and painful.

We are also organizing around lead pipes in Chicago, working to ensure that our families and our communities have access to clean drinking water.

We're also preparing to launch our Migdala Formation Program, a Catholic women's leadership development track in Chicago, which I'm really excited about. It will support Black women, immigrant women, women of color, and other women of faith as they explore our history, recognize their gifts, and bring their leadership into our churches and communities.

And during my sabbatical, I'll also be working on a series exploring the Thirteen Faces of Mary, building on my previous formation project, The Thirteen Faces of Jesus. And I look forward to sharing that with you all in the spring.

Across all of these efforts, we keep returning to something really, really simple, and that's: relationships matter. Building trust takes time, and so does forming social justice teams in parishes and universities, accompanying emerging leaders, and creating spaces where Catholics can explore the connections between our faith, our communities, and the struggle for justice all around us.

Next June, CSPL will celebrate ten years as an organization. And as we prepare for this milestone, I am so, so deeply grateful for all the people who have helped build this community, and for those who continue to show us what is possible when we come together. This has been a collective, collective effort of hundreds of grassroots Catholics in Chicago, the western suburbs, and across the Midwest. Every day I give thanks for their radical discipleship and for the countless gifts and visions they are bringing to life every single day.

I humbly ask that you keep us in your prayers, and please know that we'll be praying for you and the important work of FutureChurch, too.

You know, deep down, I dream of a Church that looks more like a fireworks show: alive with different colors and sparks lighting up the sky. A Church that doesn't ask some of its brightest lights to stay on the ground, but makes room for every gift to shine. Imagine what our Church could look like if we truly welcomed the leadership, wisdom, and gifts of all of our people.

So to my fellow firecrackers, and those cultivating your spark present here today: let's keep making some noise. Let's keep speaking up, lighting up rooms, and making sure the voices of women and marginalized communities are heard. Let's keep reminding one another that sometimes all it takes is one little spark to set something much bigger in motion.

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart for this award. I am so grateful to be in the company of people, and an organization, who continue to imagine and work toward a more just, inclusive, and faithful Church. My prayers and blessings to everyone at FutureChurch. Thank you again for the work that you do and the encouragement you offer to so many of us. Thank you.

Conversation with the Awardees

OLIVIA HASTIE Wow. I feel like I have the best job ever, to get to talk to those who are with us, but also just to take a second to sit with Joanna's words. I like that we can all be firecrackers and fireworks shows. That's really nice.

Good evening, everyone. For those who don't know me, my name is Olivia Hastie, and I am the Digital Communications Manager for FutureChurch. I'm also a doctoral candidate at Boston College, so I'm on multiple sides of the theological world, and firmly in this work with FutureChurch. So it's great to be with you all tonight.

Mollie, AnnaMarie, and Lauryn, thank you for your words tonight and for the hope you bring. And Joanna, thank you for taking time away from preparing for such important work in Rome to record and share your video with us. All four of you have shown us what it looks like to answer the question, "What is ours to do?" Thank you for your witness.

We have some time for conversation with Mollie, AnnaMarie, and Lauryn. So if you'd like to join in, you have a couple of options. First, if you're on a computer, go to the bottom of your Zoom window and click Reactions. On some versions, it's labeled Raise Hand, or it's found under More, which is the three dots. You can choose Raise Hand, and a small hand will appear next to your name, and then I'll call on you and invite you to participate. On a phone or a tablet, you can tap More, which is the three dots at the bottom of your screen, and then tap Raise Hand.

When I call your name, we'll bring you up on the screen. You can unmute yourself and ask your question. And this is optional: if you'd rather not come onto the screen, you can type your question in the chat, and I'll read it aloud.

Question from Olivia Hastie

OLIVIA HASTIE While you get your questions ready, I'm going to start us off with the first question, and it's sort of reminiscent of what has been written in the chat.

We talk really abstractly in pop culture about female friendship, and the importance of women being friends to one another. I am not too much older than the three of you, and I have found that in my twenties, the greatest gift I have been given is really strong and powerful female friendships. You spoke a little bit about your affirmations for each other, which I also thought was so beautiful. It makes me want to just sit in a circle with my own friends and say what I'm proud of them for.

But I also was wondering if you could speak to how spirituality influences your way of relating to one another and to people you meet, and how your thirst for justice, in the Church but also more broadly, builds on your relationships. I was just so moved by how deeply you love each other. Honestly, I don't have much of a specific question, more than I'd love for you to speak more about that. And the question is: How can each of us learn from you how to be friends in the way that you have demonstrated tonight?

LAURYN SWEENEY Wow, that's a big question. Gosh.

I think our friendship is founded on our faith, but it's a faith that was so authentic, and so changing, throughout college. I think we all came into Fordham raised Catholic, and maybe passionate about different faith spaces in our high schools. And then you get to a city like New York, and your world just opens in so many ways. And it happened at different points for all of us, but also at similar times.

And to have someone in the room who you knew understood your doubts, your wrestlings, your anxiety at Mass all of a sudden when you hear the Our Father, and just knowing that people were there when it all seemed to be falling apart, was the biggest consolation. I could have someone to talk that through with, someone to sit in the chapel with late and just be like, "Okay, I'm thinking about this, and I read this in my class, and this professor said this. So how do we make sense of it all?"

And then also to get ice cream, or to sit in the cafeteria and complain about how much work we had in a theology class. To do both is to be able to be yourself. One of our mentors, Sandra, who was older at Fordham, gave a reflection once that said when you feel most yourself around people, you find God. And that's what I have felt around Mollie and AnnaMarie.

OLIVIA HASTIE AnnaMarie or Mollie, do you want to jump in on this question?

ANNAMARIE PACIONE I'd just say that Lauryn always reminded us that it was always all about relationship. That is the center of spirituality, the way that I see it. And so these are people that we could be honest with, and it took the time to build the trust. And that sends me forth: How am I seeking that in new relationships, as we continue to grow and continue to evolve in new places?

MOLLIE CLARK As always, Lauryn and AnnaMarie speak such wisdom into a space, and it's such a gift to hear from them. I'll just echo them by saying that I think the most beautiful thing that happened in my relationship with God throughout my time in college was recognizing that the mystery of God was never a puzzle to be solved, but a relationship to enter more deeply into. And I think that was manifested in human friendship and beauty, in my relationship with Lauryn and AnnaMarie. Their friendship teaches me about God, and it teaches me about myself. And it is an immense gift.

OLIVIA HASTIE Gosh, you gals, you rock. I love your friendship. Thank you for that.

Question from Rita Houlihan

OLIVIA HASTIE Rita, I see your hand. Get on up here.

RITA HOULIHAN Hi, guys! My goodness, I remember meeting you in the theology room at that lecture at Fordham, and it was just one of the most sparkling, wonderful encounters.

So I'm teaching confirmation, and I have, it varies, four or six amazing young girls, 12 years old. And I just want to package you up and tell them, you know, this is what Church is. This is how women worship and can bring God to each other. So I just wanted to put that there.

That leads to my question, which is: How do we bring this spirit to young women in other campus ministry programs? I don't think you can replicate this. Because, I'm sure you're aware, there are some very active, and apparently maybe well-funded, individuals who would prefer not to have people who look like you or sound like you leading worship, or inviting speakers and welcoming a community. I've been to two of them, and I was just so struck by the beauty and the wonder.

So that's my heartfelt question. I look at these 12-year-olds I'm teaching and I ask: What will await them? What will they experience if they go to a school with a Newman Center? Will there be a door open where they can speak about who God is for them and how they express God? Sorry about my phone.

ANNAMARIE PACIONE Well, Rita, you're planting the seeds in them to be empowered to share their story, and to have the courage to be the fullness of themselves. And that is the heart of what we learned: that our stories need to be told, and we need to listen to all stories. That's the heart and the seed of it, and you're teaching them that.

MOLLIE CLARK And I'll echo that by saying that a mentor is a gift beyond measure. As Lauryn and AnnaMarie shared, Carol Gibney, our campus minister, is the person who poured into this adventure, who breathed life into us. She took us into her office, heard all of our initial ideas, and said, "Let's do it. Let's listen to the Spirit here." She recognized the Spirit, she named the Spirit, and she said, "Okay, we're going to follow that."

And so, to echo AnnaMarie, I think that you're doing that, Rita. And I also think that's a beautiful thing about FutureChurch and the resources that FutureChurch offers. There are so many incredible resources, completely free, on the website alone, that open up so many essential dialogues and platforms, so many voices that have otherwise been unjustly

marginalized by the Church and by our society. And that in itself is such an example to young people and to all people. So I just want to give you a plug there as well. Thank you.

LAURYN SWEENEY And on the note of resources: I've been thinking a lot about education, being in my current graduate school program and teaching at a parochial K-8 Catholic school in a rural town in South Texas. What does it mean to teach religion here? And I think, simply, people don't know. I'm not saying anything revolutionary. People simply don't know. They've never heard of FutureChurch. They've never heard of feminist theologians, or of theology outside of the media right now: Ascension Presents, Word on Fire. Those are the Catholic names.

There are resources out there for other voices, but for some reason they're just not as prominent. Give me a second here. These are my middle school religion textbooks. All the art looks like this. All the art looks like this.

So, recognizing that Mollie, AnnaMarie, and I have talked about being able to attend a Jesuit university with a very well-run Catholic studies program that exposed us to these things, that is not accessible to Catholics on the whole. So how do you bring it down throughout Catholic education? How do you require feminist theology classes at Catholic universities? How do you put that down at the high school level, the middle school level? Because kids are ready for it, and all you need to do is put it in front of someone. It's simply not being put forth enough, and the spaces are not being created at all levels for it.

RITA HOULIHAN Right. So, Russ, I hope it's okay to do a little pre-announcement, but we've commissioned an Easter pageant, which will accurately depict who stayed at the tomb, and who received the resurrection invitation. So that's something; at least we're trying to find ways. But thank you. And I just also want to, for the record, give a shout-out to Carol Gibney. Maybe that's a community I'd love to reach out to, more people in her community in that position. So thank you so much. You're all wonderful.

OLIVIA HASTIE Thanks, Rita, for that amazing question, which I feel like I learned so much from. And also, standing in the blessing of having gone to a Jesuit institution: that's a blessing for real, for real, for us young women.

Question from Sister Christine Schenk

OLIVIA HASTIE Chris, I see your hand. Come on up.

SISTER CHRISTINE SCHENK Yeah, thank you. What a wonderful witness, the three of you. You fill me up. I can't thank you enough.

Just a quick thing: thank you for saying that about the resources. Because way back in the day, when we were trying to figure out how we were ever going to change this monolithic Church, when nobody knew about Mary Magdalene at all, we saw early on that one of our main things was to educate, both through liturgy and through good theology and good biblical studies. And the way to do that was to create resources. And from then on, it was up to the Spirit. Whoever ordered these packets was going to do it wherever their faith community was.

And I can't even tell you. I get crying; it makes me emotional to know that the Spirit is very faithful, and people showed up. And I think that's one of the big principles of justice and community organizing: you do what you're called to do, and then you let it rip, and the Spirit does her thing.

Anyway, I'm sorry for that little prologue. I also went to a Catholic university, a Jesuit university, Georgetown, a zillion years ago, and made the best friends of my life. And we are still the best friends. There are about 12 of us who hop on Zoom every Friday. It started during COVID, and we support each other through grandkids and illnesses and God knows what all. It's a real testimony to something a dear Medical Mission Sister friend once said to me: that there's nothing like God between friends. And I think it's absolutely the truth.

But the other piece is that one of the important things that happened to me when I was at Georgetown is that I was mentored. In those days, you had a Jesuit chaplain for each of the different schools. And I decided there couldn't possibly be a God, because the world was so screwed up. It really broke my heart. I still went to Mass every day, because it still felt better to be around people who believed. And anyway, he met with me once a month for about three and a half years as I worked through this faith journey. And it really changed my whole life, as did my believing friends.

So I've heard a little bit about what mentoring meant to you. And I think the challenges back in the '60s were a little bit different than for women coming up in the Church today, facing what's been called the "dark night of patriarchy," because it's totally overwhelming when you get the picture. So I wonder if you could say a few words about what it was like for you to negotiate that journey. Carol was certainly a mentor to you, and anything else you want to share with us about that. Thank you for tolerating my babbling.

So the question was: What was it like to navigate the dark night of patriarchy? And maybe I'm projecting all over you. Maybe you did that in fourth grade, I don't know. Were there challenges? I hear that there were. What helped you? And what would you recommend to others who are trying to navigate that, especially within the Catholic Church?

LAURYN SWEENEY I think a lot about this, and I've had a very similar experience, Christine. At Fordham, this is when it all came, or you see it in a new way. And I think about: Where was I caught? Who caught me? It was people older than I, who had walked the journey, who I knew, when I talked to them, had gone through the same.

And the Catholic Studies department at Fordham: I remember sitting in those classes having a bit of cognitive dissonance. Catholic Studies seminar: we're talking about the 272, we're talking about Jesuit slaveholding, we're talking about the terrible injustices of clerical abuse and the treatment of LGBTQ+ persons, all of these topics. And I just remember thinking, about my professors: Why are you doing what you're doing? How are you still a practicing Catholic after devoting your whole life to this? How are you teaching theology? How are you working within the walls of this institution?

And then I realized: they have a love for the Church, and they love it so much that they will critique it to its highest degree. And I firmly believe some are called to stay within the Church

and do the advocacy, and some are called to leave, and their witness should be a witness to us all. So it was having people who had walked through the journey and who would share it.

Also, Sister Mary Catherine, a Presentation sister. Mollie and AnnaMarie and I were all involved in Praise and Worship at Fordham, which is an adoration group that would meet weekly, late Wednesday nights. And Sister Mary Catherine was always there. Even if it wasn't, "We're going to talk about this," she would bring us a pizza, and we would just chat and talk about all the things that were going on in the world and in our hearts.

And I saw Catholic women and Catholic people who were living in justice, who found a way to connect their faith to justice. And when I saw and heard stories of working in the emergency room for 12-hour shifts, of immigration advocacy, of mental health careers, counseling people through traumatic situations, it all made sense. I'm not Catholic just to sit in the church and know about different types of incense. I am Catholic to go out and live in the world. And it was simply hearing stories. Again, back to relationship. It's all about relationship.

OLIVIA HASTIE Thank you. How about Mollie or AnnaMarie? Not to put you on the spot or anything, and it's fine if you want to take a pass. It's just that you guys are so beautiful, and I love hearing from you.

ANNAMARIE PACIONE Thank you. We certainly faced some challenges, and it was hard to strike a balance: How do we push our community to a place of growth and of widening horizons, and also, how do we stay true to the fire inside of my body that makes me feel like I'm burning about what needs to be done? What is right? If we just ask ourselves the question: What is right and what is just right now? What does right relationship look like?

And it was hard to not always feel like everyone was willing to listen, was willing to be in our spaces, was willing to participate and come together and listen and encounter each other. But we persisted nonetheless. And Sister Mary Catherine also told us: "This is my chair, around this table, in this Church. I'm not going to give up my chair." So, great advice.

MOLLIE CLARK Yeah, I just again echo and uplift everything Lauryn and AnnaMarie have said. An image that I wrestled with a lot, and carry with me as we embarked upon this work and as we continue to move forward, trying to heed the voice of the Spirit, is the image of the Sacred Heart: this idea of a heart that beats in radical love, and yet is wounded simultaneously; and the ways in which human beings can harm one another. We can wound one another just as much as we can comfort and heal and provide hope for one another.

And so, again, to speak to what Anna and Lauryn have shared: the solace of their friendship through those hardships was such a balm for my own heart, as well as the witness of our mentors, of the people who have walked before us. I think again of the immense privilege of attending Fordham, of having professors like Dr. Imperatori-Lee and the entire American Catholic Studies department, of having witnesses like Sister Mary Catherine, and organizations like FutureChurch, and Martha, and especially Rita's work with Mary Magdalene.

I remember vividly joining a Mary Magdalene Zoom my freshman year of college, and Rita was like, "You need to know the real story." And I was like, "I need to know the real story!" And that just set me afire. And then meeting Martha at a Mary Magdalene Day celebration a few years later ignited this beautiful relationship between Catholic Women Speak and FutureChurch. It's just the way that such life has been poured into us, through the people who are willing to name the Spirit moving, teaching us through their witness to do that for ourselves, and now to try to carry that for others.

OLIVIA HASTIE Thank you.

RUSS PETRUS Hey, everyone, this is Russ. Can I ask everyone in the audience to stop reacting, just for a moment? I'm sorry, just for a moment. And for the four of you to smile, so I can get a screenshot. I've been trying to get a screenshot of the four of you that looks good, but inevitably one of you has a silly-looking face. So if I can get all four of you smiling at the same time, we'll get a screenshot of this special little moment. All right. All right, beautiful, I've got it. It's great. Okay, I'm sorry. I'm going to turn things back over to Liv and get out of here.

OLIVIA HASTIE Thanks, Russ. I'm glad we got the photo.

I have a question, but I want to start it off by saying: I don't know if anybody here is a theater fan, but I love *Wicked*. I just saw it in Boston. And the conversation about friendships, about how friendships change us, about how friendships orient us toward God: I could not help but think of the song at the very end, when Glinda and Elphaba are saying goodbye to each other in this really intense way. Not that you are saying goodbye to each other, but you have parted ways from being at Fordham, and you are still literally so connected. I don't know about anybody else in the audience, but I can literally feel the invisible strings that tie you three together, in the most beautiful way. So just thank you.

And on the subject of music: Mollie, I'm wondering if you might sing for us the song that AnnaMarie mentioned earlier. It's hard for us to sing all together on Zoom, so it really would just be your voice, but trust that we are all singing with you.

MOLLIE CLARK It would be an immense privilege. Thank you, Olivia.

Mollie sings the song.

OLIVIA HASTIE Thank you all so much for that. I can't see myself, and I can't pin myself. Russ, can you pin me back? Am I back? Okay, good. Sorry.

Mollie, thank you. That was such a beautiful song. I feel like I want to just sit with that for a second. It's not an easy thing to be on Zoom and sing for people, so thank you truly for the courage to do that for us.

Invitation: Catholic Women Preach 10th Anniversary

OLIVIA HASTIE I am going to share a few housekeeping items before I turn things back to Russ. So thank you to all those who asked questions, and thank you again to Mollie, AnnaMarie, and Lauryn.

Before I hand things back to Russ, as I said, I want to share an invitation I'm really excited about. I first heard about Catholic Women Preach in 2017. My cousin, Krista Mahoney, whom many of you might know, preached for Catholic Women Preach, and I recorded the video for her. I was in high school, and I was like, "What even is this?" But I was so moved by it, and honestly so transformed spiritually by the thought that a woman could preach, that I tuned in every week. And then, lo and behold, probably nine-ish years later, here I am working with FutureChurch. So I'm really excited to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Catholic Women Preach.

Since All Saints Day 2016, CWP has shared the voices of over 600 women preachers from around the world. I am proud to be one of those preachers, but I'm even prouder of the company that I keep. It's a joy and an honor to be counted among those 600 women.

To celebrate these 10 years, please join us on Sunday, November 1, at 7 p.m. Eastern Time. We do turn the clocks back, though, so just note that it's 7 p.m. We're having a virtual All Saints Day Preaching Slam. We'll hear from Kayla August, Ann Garrido, Cecilia González-Andrieu, and Kerry Alys Robinson, who will each lift up a woman saint. It's an impressive lineup, and I can't wait to listen to what they have to say. I'm sure it's going to be inspiring.

Registration is free, and Russ will drop the link in the chat right now, so you can register tonight. I hope to see each and every one of you there. And if you have any issues with registration, just reach out to one of us, and we can make sure you have the link. So thank you. I hope you'll join us to celebrate ten... what is it, Russ?

RUSS PETRUS Ten silence-shattering years.

OLIVIA HASTIE Ten silence-shattering years. Yes, okay. I did another one today that was "a decade of preaching from the margins, in solidarity with the margins."

RUSS PETRUS Yeah, love it.

OLIVIA HASTIE I'm going to town on the 10th anniversary of Catholic Women Preach.

Thank You and Closing Prayer

RUSS PETRUS Love it. Thank you, Liv, for that invitation.

And thank you to Joanna, and Mollie, Anna, and Lauryn. It really is an honor to be able to recognize and celebrate you.

I want to thank our keynote panel from Thursday night, especially Daryl for moderating, and Gabriel, Angela, and Bishop John. Your words of wisdom and your insights continue to inspire us.

I want to thank the staff: Ann Marie, who you never see but who makes all this stuff work, and of course Martha and Olivia, for your roles in tonight's proceedings and all of your support along the way for the Fall Event. And to all of our volunteers from the board who have done welcomes and introductions and prayers: thank you.

And finally, I want to thank all of you for joining us, and for supporting this labor of love for all of us, as we work together to bring this Church that we love to life: to life with the gifts and the potential and, I guess, the firecrackers of all of its members.

And now, to close us out, I would like to bring on our FutureChurch board secretary, Marie Graf, to lead us in a closing prayer.

MARIE GRAF Let's take a moment and collect ourselves.

Let us pray.

God of all the saints, we thank you for this night, and for the great cloud of witnesses, the famous and the forgotten, those we have loved and those we have never met: those who carried this work before us, those who carry it with us now, and those who will carry it into the future, like the four women we honor tonight.

You have made us one Body in Christ, many members, many gifts, one Spirit. Tonight you have shown us what the Body can do when it is faithful, creative, courageous, and bold in love.

Keep alive in us the prophetic fire you have kindled here, or, as Joanna would say, keep the fireworks alive. Send us out with the stories we have heard and the question we have carried: *What is ours to do?*

Give us courage to answer it in our parishes and faith communities, our neighborhoods, and our public lives. Give us one another for the long work. Make us people of the common good, who cherish and defend the dignity of every person, until your justice and peace reign on earth as in heaven.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

RUSS PETRUS Amen. Thank you, Marie.

All right, and now for my favorite moment. Well, I shouldn't say my favorite moment, because the evening was beautiful. But you all know that I love that holy chaos at the end of a FutureChurch gathering. So if you want to unmute yourself and say your farewells and your thank-yous and your good nights and your blessings, please feel free to do so now. It's a little Pentecost moment for all of us.

Participants unmute to share their thanks, farewells, and blessings.

End of recording.