

A Million Voices

Gospel Nonviolence for the Life of the Church

[Download the *A Million Voices* resources packet in the Magdala Market](#)

FutureChurch is launching a new education-advocacy effort geared to providing ordinary Catholics with tools to discuss pressing issues facing the Catholic Church and to resist unjust suppression of that discussion by some Church officials.

The *A Million Voices* project was named quoting St. Catherine of Siena who once pleaded with a high ranking churchman to not be silent about the need to reform the clergy. She begged him to “Cry Out with a Million Voices: It is Silence that Kills the World.” Catherine lived in a time of significant corruption in the church and spent her life working for its reform. Fearless in speaking to Popes and high-ranking cardinals alike, she urged Gregory XI to root out injustice to the poor on the part of his clergy and pleaded for an end to their feuds with secular governments.

While the challenges facing Catholicism in the 21st century are different from those of the 14th century, they are no less wounding to the People of God. Worldwide, the priest shortage is forcing thousands of parish closings contrary to the wishes of parishioners, and denying millions of faithful Catholics access to the Mass and Sacraments, especially in the developing world. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Catholic women and married men worldwide are asking to be ordained or to return to the active ministry.

The failure of bishops to deal with the priest shortage, clergy sex abuse, and the lack of transparency in no small number of financial scandals is driving even the most faithful Catholics from the Church. All the while gay and lesbian Catholics and their families suffer alienation from a faith community that should be offering support rather than offense. When ordinary Catholics, including Catholic nuns, priests, teachers, catechists and members of church renewal organizations attempt to discuss these and other important issues affecting the Body of Christ, they are banned from Church property, removed from church-related positions, subjected to investigations by Rome and otherwise marginalized or sanctioned.

Even so, FutureChurch believes the power of the Spirit at work in the People of God has great healing and transformative potential for the life of the Church. The *A Million Voices* project will provide education and advocacy information to address these and other painful situations. The goal is to make room in the Church for the adult conversations we must have with our leaders if we are ever to embody God’s love and justice on earth as in heaven.

Perhaps the most innovative part of the new project is education about the use of Gospel nonviolence when a Catholic’s right and responsibility to speak on a “matter concerning the good of the Church” (Canon 212.2) is violated. A foundational segment discusses principles and steps that must be in place when discerning the use of Gospel nonviolence to reform and renew the church (as adapted from [Richard K Taylor’s book: *Love in Action*](#)). Other items include basic principles of community organizing, nonviolent resistance strategies when discussion is being suppressed, how to use the media, prayer resources and suggestions for discerning a response to common abuses of authority in the Church.

The project also provides strategies to promote discussion of important issues in the church such as the rights and responsibilities of ordinary Catholics; women’s equality in Catholicism, including discussion of current church teaching on women’s ordination; and the link between mandatory celibacy and parish closings. A Three Part Program Discussing Catholic Teaching and the Non-Ordination of Women, included in the packet, suggests a session using a

digital version of the 1999 debate at Georgetown University between Sr. Maureen Fiedler SL and Fr. Joseph Fessio SJ on the topic *Can a Woman Receive the Sacrament of Orders*, as well as information on resources from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' on this topic.

Also included is helpful references to related projects under way in other church reform organizations and of course, current FutureChurch education, prayer and advocacy materials. The debate is available for free download as a [podcast](#) from the FutureChurch website or as CDs available for purchase in [Magdala's Market](#), FutureChurch's online store.

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