

The Future Church
by John Allen, Jr.

Book Discussion

5 hours Credit

Leader's Guide

Prepared by

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***John Allen, Jr. will be the featured speaker at the 2012 Faith Formation
Conference in November***

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1. Mr. Allen writes that the Catholic Church is the “oldest globalized institution on earth.” However, he says it is “upside down in the twenty-first century.” What does he mean? (pages 2-3)
Twentieth Century dominated by global north, now 2/3rds of Catholics living in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Politics of identity a reaction to secularization. Judaism interreligious relationship of last 40 years replaced by struggle with assertive Islam. A historical pastoral energy toward youth now facing an aging population. Church now relying on lay leadership and ministry with declining clergy. Moral teaching trying to keep pace with scientific advances in areas such as genetics and cloning. Social teaching formed during Industrial Revolution having to adjust to 21st Century globalized world of multinational corporations and intergovernmental organizations. Social teaching focused on humans now required to consider the welfare of the cosmos. Church diplomacy relied on the “Great Catholic Power” of the day is moving toward a multipolar world that isn’t Catholic. The explosion of Pentecostals converting Catholics.
2. Mr. Allen writes as a journalist, not a theologian. What are his credentials and what does he mean when he writes that this book “is an exercise in description not prescription”? (pages 5-9)
He is writing is about the issues the Church is facing, not what it ought to face or as a statement of faith. He notes the 10 trends and doesn’t judge them. His 10 trends are not from an official list from the Vatican. The three sources that influenced his choices include: years as a Vatican Correspondent for The National Catholic Reporter, interviews with theologians, clergy, liturgical experts, political activists, sociologists, and ecumenical leaders, responses from thousands of Catholics to his online Internet column “All Things Catholic.” He has also written many books about the Church, including an authorized biography of Pope Benedict XVI.

This is a book about global Catholicism, not the local viewpoint of the 6% of the Church that lives in the United States.

3. **Trend One – A World Church** (pages 13-53)

Discuss how the Catholic population of the world has shifted from the Palestinian/European/North American dominated Church of the first 19 centuries to the ever increasing Latin American/African/Asian populations of the 20th and 21st centuries. What does a shift from ad intra to ad extra mean?

See demographic lists on page 18.

WEST – aging Catholic population in part due to low birthrate, decreasing vocations, morally liberal (some acceptance of homosexuals in the Church, a married priesthood, women priests), very involved laity in ministries and leadership positions. Currently, 20% of clergy in U.S. is foreign-born and growing.

SOUTH – large youthful population with exploding birthrate in Latin America and Africa (by 2025, only 1 in 5 Catholics will be non-Hispanic Caucasians), large numbers of vocations, morally conservative (especially anti-gay), and socially liberal (anti-war, pro-environment, pro-Palestinian, skeptical of capitalism, greater role of U.N. vs. U.S).

Localization of the Church since Vatican II (sacraments in the language of the people, “baptizing pre-existing cultural traditions”, and policy of turning over control to the local clergy).

Leadership role of Catholic activists in democracy movements and advocates for the poor.

(pages 23-37).

Ad intra = refers to the internal life of the Church. West focused on issues of papal primacy, infallibility, the Roman Curia, episcopal collegiality, ordination of women, clergy celibacy, and institutional reform. (page 37)

Ad extra = refers to engagement with broader religious and social questions outside the

Church. Global South more concerned with its relationship with Islam, alleviation

of poverty, economic and resource equity, dealing with religious extremists, genocide, HIV/AIDS, war, environmental devastation, refugees, international trade agreement consequences, and other pastoral concerns. Expect more tension with the U.S. and China and more support for the U.N. (pages 37-43).

4. **Trend Two – Evangelical Catholicism** (pages 54-94)

What is evangelical Catholicism and how is it alike or different from Catholic

liberalism and Pentecostalism? Secularization has weakened religious faith,

affiliation, and practice in Europe. What is it and how has the Vatican responded to it with evangelical Catholicism?

Evangelical Catholicism is a bold proclamation of timeless truths using the tools of the cultures of today. Traditional Catholic thought, speech, practice, with faith as a personal choice vs. cultural inheritance. Proclamation of Catholic Identity to the world with implications for culture, society, and politics. (page 56)

Ushered in by Pope John Paul II. Has led to a crackdown on women religious, Catholic media, Catholic universities and hospitals, and the literal translation of the Roman Missal to assert traditional Catholic Identity. Strongest in the global North and in response to Pentecostalism in South America. Apologetics becoming more predominant. (page 75-83)

This will engage liberals even more in social justice causes with the global South vs. making any headway with ad intra issues.

Catholic liberalism sees a relationship between the Church and culture and adjusts

teachings and structures to be relevant to the modern world. Was very popular in 1960s-1980s. More pastoral outlook than ideological. In response, some liberals have demanded reform, criticized the Vatican, public conformity with private independence, doing what can be done within existing structures, laying intellectual foundation for change, silenced, being Christian witnesses to the world (justice and service), and some discussion of schism. Has the ear of the media in the West. (pages 74-82)

Pentecostalism challenges modernity and emphasizes the spiritual experience over doctrine. Doesn't need buildings or hierarchy. Fastest growing form of Christianity

in the world, especially in Catholic countries.

Secularization rose in response to a strong distinction between Church and State, modernity, which includes the Enlightenment and empirical science. (page 59)

Advocates sometimes called "cafeteria Catholics." Driven by Internet and mass media.

Poland only European country where a majority (56.7%) attend weekly Mass. Animosity

between secular leaders and the Church has arisen. The formation of the European Union (historical Christian countries) didn't refer to God in its documents.

More clashes between Church and State, such as, review of financial privileges enjoyed by the Church under civil laws (nonprofit status, mandates for social programs of Catholic Charities, hospitals, and schools). (pages 79-80)

The global South tension between the Vatican and the U.S. due to the rise of Islamic radicalism and the European political left. (page 85)

5. Trend Three – Islam (pages 95-140)

What does the author mean when he writes, “Islam has replaced Judaism as the most important interfaith relationship for the Catholic Church?” Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have reached out to Muslim groups to partner against secularism. How can this be if Islam is seen as a terrorist religion?

Discuss the demographics that illustrate most Muslims are not Arab and most Christians are not European or North American.

There are 2.3 billion Christians and 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. (page 96) Christianity adds 30 million new members and Islam (Sunni and Shi’ite) 23 million

each year. See population list on page 99.

Pope Benedict XVI has a vision of a great Catholic-Muslim alliance against secularism in the West. (page 97)

Islam in Europe (pages 100-101) Sunnis and Shi’ites (pages 102-104)

Catholicism closest to structure of Shi’ites. (page 125)

Muslim-Catholic Liaison Committee in 1995, annual session with Al-Azhar University in

Cairo, annual meeting of World Islamic Call Society, growth in Islamic Studies in

universities, agreement in some areas of culture wars (anti-abortion, pro-family,

anti-homosexuality). (pages 118-120)

Benedict XVI sees the world today not Islam vs. West but Christianity vs. Secularism.

Radical Islam rooted in underdevelopment and injustice in the Muslim world, not

religion. (pages 127-128)

Shifting Catholic attitudes toward Judaism. The global South doesn’t share historical

responsibility for the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. (pages 131-132)

Politically, Southern Christians and Southern Muslims are anti-American, anti-globalization, pro-Palestinian, and anti-secularization. (pages 138-139)

6. Trend Four – The New Demography (pages 141-177)

Discuss how fertility rates and immigration change the demographics of the Catholic Church.

Fertility rates are higher in developing countries and lower in affluent countries. (pages 142-147)

Europe (pages 148-150)

U.S. (page 150)

Asia (page 151)

Latin America (pages 151-152)

Africa (page 152)

Middle East (pages 152-153)

Shrinking population leads to fear about national identity and anti-immigrant actions.

(pages 156-157)

European bishops more anti-immigration because many immigrants are Muslim.

American bishops more pro because many immigrants are Catholic. (pages 164-165)

The Church and women will take larger roles in caring for graying populations.

There will be a crisis in health care and pensions, and growth in elder abuse and

elder ministries. Increase in late vocations. (pages 157-164)

7. Trend Five – Expanding Lay Roles (pages 178-216)

What is the history of the laity in spreading the Gospel and what forces within the Church are driving the expansion of laypeople in ministerial and administrative positions once held almost exclusively by priests?

Lay activism has been part of the Christian story from the beginning. The “dynamism of primitive Christianity was not created by priests and bishops, but rather by lay Christian women and men who were on fire with the gospel and who carried its message into every walk of life, thereby transforming the ancient world.” (page 183) Examples

noted are Maria Luisa Chumpitaz, Donna Orsuto, Priscilla, Aquila, Onesiphorus, Lydia, St. Francis of Assisi. Movements such as Focolare, Communion and Liberation, and Sant’Egidio. (pages 178-183)

The lay role constricted over the centuries with the emergence of the clerical caste.

Priest shortages, Vatican II, sexual abuse and financial scandals, and Pentecostalization of Catholicism have led to new lay movements in the Church (many named on pages 184-192)

Many parishes in U.S. administered by a layperson called a “parish life coordinator.”

(page 193)

Lay professionals are 80% women in the U.S. in 2005. (page 195) Majority of pastoral

care in parishes, hospitals, schools, and other institutions done by women. (page 198)

Tension over control and message. Fear of feminization. Has been going on for the last 1000 years. (page 202)

Lay voices representing the face of the Church are visible in media.

Clergy may become like bishops, rarely seen, a sacramental role. Lay people do

the work of Christianity in urban areas of the South where Pentecostals are successful. (pages 210-211)

8. Trend Six – The Biotech Revolution (pages 217-255)

What is biotechnology and what issues does the Church face in this area?

Biotechnology is the scientific understanding of the mechanics of human, animal, and plant biology and manipulation of it through technical means. (page 219)

The Church has positions on abortion, ANT, and homosexuality. New issues continually

arise like cloning, chimeras, IVF, GIFT, TOT, LTOT, embryonic cell research, assisted suicide, GMOs, eugenics, genetic engineering, savior babies, questions of free

will vs. programming, and defining what is human. (pages 220-231)

Global justice in health care and HIV/AIDS care. (pages 237-240)

Rise of the theologian-biologist. Natural law argument. (page 243)

North agribusinesses influencing Vatican to be pro-GMO, while South is anti-GMO due

to negative consequences on health and environment. (page 248) Vatican may become

a mediator in the debate.

9. Trend Seven – Globalization (pages 256-297)

What are the positives and negatives of globalization?

What is Catholic teaching on globalization?

Globalization is world interconnectedness driven by technology, communications,

travel, and economics. Has created vast opportunities for some. (page 257)

In last 25 years, more people have escaped poverty more rapidly in all of human history.

Men and women religious orders have thought globally and acted locally for centuries.

(page 259)

Proponents = level economic playing field, competition, efficiency, innovation, spread

of human rights, and the rule of law.

Opponents = colonialism on a worldwide scale, imposition of Western corporate

interests (see MNC list on page 290), suppression of local cultures and values. (pages 260-261)

Catholic Teaching on Globalization = No formal written statement at the time this book was written, however, Catholics are to follow the tenants of

Catholic Social Teaching as reiterated in Globalization and Catholic Social

Thought by Father John Coleman, S.J. and The Genoa Manifesto (pages 261-269)

Six concerns of Catholics: widening gap between rich and poor, spread of conflict and arms trade, human trafficking, corruption, status of migrants and refugees, and the digital divide that includes pitching content to specified subgroups. (pages 269-279)

The speed of events can be a problem for a centralized Vatican and growth of “horizontal Catholicism” that can meet needs at the local level without direction from the Vatican. (pages 284-287) May evolve into “virtual parishes” for youth. (pages 295-296)

10. **Trend Eight – Ecology** (pages 298-337)

The Vatican is the first “carbon neutral” state in Europe. (page 299)
What evidence is there for Church leaders to argue that Christianity is the solution to the ecological crisis?

Pope John Paul II 1990 message on World Peace Day titled The Ecological Crisis:

A Common Responsibility. Five key ideas: stewardship, option for the poor, a right to a safe and healthy natural environment, the precautionary principle, and lifestyle changes. (pages 300-306)

Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI promote three environmental causes that are also human rights causes: global warming and climate change are facts, water scarcity, and protection of the Amazon from deforestation. (pages 310-319)

Promotion of new Catholic physical plants to go “green.”

Comeback of natural theology – God reveals Himself through nature.

Revival of the theology of creation. (page 322)

The Church is often the largest private landowner in many urban areas (parishes, schools, hospitals, colleges, hospices, social service centers, youth centers . . .). Bring

together two elements of official Catholic ecology – defending the earth and defending the poor. Create urban farms. (pages 334-336)

***Encourage the spirituality of simplicity (lower consumption and affluent lifestyles).
(pages 336-337)***

11. Trend Nine – Multipolarism (pages 338-374)

What is multipolarism and what does it mean for the Church?

Multipolarism is the political, military, economic, and strategic arrangement where

there isn't one power (U.S.), or tension between two powers (Cold War), but rather, interaction of multiple points of influence. (page 340)

The BRIC nations of Brazil, Russia, India, and China are predicted to have combined

economies, by 2040, greater than the U.S. and Europe, and 40% of the world's population. First time since 380 that the world won't be dominated by a state(s) shaped by Christianity. (pages 340-341)

China – combination of political centralization and economic liberalization.

Pentecostals making inroads, 90% of all Protestants, following expulsion of Catholic missionaries. Catholicism mostly rural. Internal division over cooperation with Communist regime. Tensions with Vatican. Even though Christians a small percentage of the population, if the numbers are true, China is the third largest Christian nation in the world! (pages 342-349)

India – a world leader in information and communications technology, engineering,

biotechnology, and pharmaceuticals. The Indian Ocean is its zone of influence to counter China.

Catholics divided into three rites. Partly due to Mother Teresa, is widely respected

for its network of schools, hospitals, and social service centers. 60-70% of all

Catholics are Dalits (untouchables). Some violence towards Catholics from Hindu

nationalists. (pages 349-352)

Russia – very low fertility rate likely to result in 1/4th population decrease and a gray

society by 2040. Under Putin it has become a “managed democracy.” Trapped between

the Old West (Europe and U.S.) and the New East (China).

Tensions between Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodox Church.

Vatican giving Russian Orthodox priority, so no growth in Roman Church.

Dramatic growth of Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses. (pages 353-356)

Brazil – one of the widest gaps between rich and poor. Sees self as leader of developing world. Pro-U.N. and South-South trade.

Largest Catholic country on earth with 85% claiming to be Catholics.

Laboratory for

liberation theology. A pioneer in environmental activism and protector of indigenous

cultures. Brazilian Catholicism features “ecclesial base communities.”

Rapid urbanization and economic development over past 30 years has led to 17% increase in Protestants (mostly Pentecostals) and 7.3% increase in no religion.

Priest ratio is 1 to 8,604 resulting in a great need for lay empowerment.

(pages 356-359)

Consequences for the Church – expand interreligious priority from Catholic-Muslim relations to also include Catholic-Hindu-Buddhist-Taoist dialogue.

Pentecostalism will be the primary “other” for much of the Church in the 21st

Century. (pages 359-363)

In principle, the church is neutral on forms of government. No government is good or bad, it's the instruments of power that work for the common good that count.

Since 1890 (Catholic Social Teaching), democracy has been found to be most consistent for the common good. (page 363-364).

Church will feel pressure to concentrate missionary resources in China.

Rather than relying on the “Great Power Theory (U.S.)” the Vatican will have a more

“bric-a-brac” style of diplomacy (Brazil for social justice, U.S. for religious freedom and human rights, and Muslim states for allies in the culture wars.) (page 368)

12. **Trend Ten - Pentecostalism (pages 375-413)**

What and where is Pentecostalism and how is it changing the Church, especially in Latin America?

Pentecostalism is the movement within Christianity emphasizing direct personal experience with God through “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” (page 377)

No need for sacraments or clergy and has a missionary impulse.

Established Christian denominations (including Catholics) have a form of Pentecostalism called “Charismatics.” (page 378)

Pentecostalism is the second largest Christian denomination in the world after

Roman Catholicism.

Two thirds of Pentecostals are in the developing world. Major global centers are in

Chile, Guatemala, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Korea, the Philippines, and China. (page 379)

Pentecostals have greatest success in Latin America among the aspirational class.

Some evidence it's a “way station” between a traditional church and no church. (page 389)

“Prosperity Gospel” is the belief that God will reward, materially and with good health, those with faith. Poverty is the result of lack of faith vs.

injustice. Person can do something about it resulting in hope and effort. (page 383)

Catholic Charismatic Renewal began in 1967. About 11% of all Catholics and very popular among Hispanics. Emphasis on exorcisms, miracles, healing,

visions, and speaking in tongues. Have in common with Pentecostals belief in the Holy Spirit, grace, evil spirits, and miracles. (pages 384-386) Both can be cult-like with charismatic leaders.

Latin America in grip of religious upheaval. Losses to Pentecostals, but a stronger Catholicism due to them. (pages 387-389)

Some explanations for Pentecostal growth: American financial support and Reagan

“Santa Fe Document” recommending efforts to subvert Latin American Catholic

liberation theology, baptized but unconnected Catholics due to lack of pastoral care,

a priest shortage, an authoritarian and distant hierarchy, liberation theology became

political, the “ecstasy deficit”, health support, emancipation of women, open to inculturation, community in an urban setting, personal morality, encouragement of

economic improvement, and competition for members. (pages 389-397)

Consequences for the Church – restoring apologetics “defense of the faith” as a central

element for ecumenism. Horizontal ecumenism with individual Catholic parishes or groups in dialog with Pentecostal congregations or groups.

Political ecumenism over

shared culture wars, such as, abortion and homosexuality. Prodding Latin American Catholicism into more pastoral care of its members. Ministry to the growing number of nones (mostly former Catholics who became Pentecostals and left both behind).

Competition with Pentecostals promotes inculturation with the theology of the Holy Spirit prominent and the rise of Charismatic Catholicism. Exorcism, drug and alcohol recovery, the empowerment of women, and small Christian communities, improved music ministries all will have benefits within the Church. (pages 399-409)

Another possibility could be “personal prelature” where priests and lay people are attached to non-territorial groupings rather than physical parishes or dioceses, which allows for geographical mobility. (pages 412-413)

13. You may wish to discuss some **other proposed trends** listed on pages 415-416.

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