

“Learning from #MeToo/#ChurchToo: Intersectionality, Solidarity, and the Catholic Church” Conversation Guide



This conversation guide consists of both questions for discussion and a list of resources referred to in the lecture. Facilitators may wish to make use of these other resources as a part of their presentation and discussion of the materials. In utilizing this guide, we recommend facilitators choose those questions most helpful to the purpose of their group.

View this lecture here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8pRIUH324U&t=4264s>

Questions for Conversation:

- Dr. Imperatori-Lee begins her lecture with an acknowledgement that the subject of her talk provokes “deep feelings and sincere anger” from people with many different beliefs and commitments. What is the first thought or emotion that arises for you when you think of the Me Too Movement, sexual abuse, and women in the church? As you listen to Dr. Imperatori-Lee’s lecture, how is that initial response altered or deepened?
- We are discovering that abusive and predatory behavior is not limited to any single ideological perspective but pervades both church and society - from Marcial Maciel to Jean Vanier. What does this pervasiveness reveal about the culture of power in both our churches and society?
- Define each of the following terms: sexual abuse, assault, harassment, rape culture. How do the first three actions reflect and perpetuate a culture of rape?
- Do you recognize the “yeah, yeah” or “snap” moments described by feminist scholars? What do these moments suggest to you about both the importance of solidarity and where we may fail at solidarity?
- Reflect on Dr. Imperatori-Lee’s question, “What do you think of when you think of a Good Woman?” What are her characteristics? What is her demeanor? When you have answered these questions, then ask yourself, how is your image of a Good Woman informed by your church and your society?

- According to Dr. Imperatori-Lee, what logics and theologies contribute to the perpetuation of sexism in our church? What other examples would you add to her list?
- Dr. Imperatori-Lee outlines an existing Catholic sexual ethic of “don’t,” illuminating how this acts-based ethic fails to take into account a moral agent who must discern in the midst of complex lived realities. She argues that instead we need to cultivate a sexual ethic of concern. What do you imagine a sexual ethic of concern might look like?
- How does the current reality of clericalism continue to perpetuate the influence of Greek philosophy on Christianity, wherein the body is seen as less holy than the spirit?
- Philosopher Kate Manne offers two key terms for this lecture: misogyny and himpathy. How would you relate these two terms to the current culture of clericalism and abuse in the church?
- Dr. Imperatori-Lee concludes her lecture with an exhortation to believe women, turning to Scripture to illustrate the power of women’s witness:

Matthew 28: 1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

Spend a few moments reflecting on this passage. How can we become more fully the church of resurrection and life for all people, especially women and others who are marginalized in both church and society?

Resources:

Survivor Support

If you have been the victim of abuse in the Catholic Church, please reach out to someone. Below are contact points that can help.

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline	800-656-HOPE (4673) or online chat
Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests	Assistance Line: 1-877-SNAP-HEALS (877-762-7432)
Victim Assistance Coordinators	Click here to contact a victim assistance coordinator in your diocese.

- For reports and documents on the abuse crisis, educational information, and steps on how to take action, visit <http://catholiclayresponse.com/>.
- Judith Plaskow's discussion of the "**yeah, yeah**" experience can be found in the classic collection *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*: https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/881189.Womanspirit_Rising
- Sara Ahmed's discussion of the "**feminist snap**" can be found in her book *Living a Feminist Life*: <https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/1933/chapter-abstract/191606/Feminist-Snap?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- To find out more about **Tarana Burke** and the history of the **Me Too Movement**, visit: <https://metoomvmt.org/the-inception/>
- To find out more about the origin of the **ChurchToo** hashtag, visit poet Emily Joy's website: <http://emilyjoypoetry.com/churchtoo>
- To learn more about the logic of misogyny, Dr. Imperatori-Lee recommends reading philosopher **Kate Manne**'s volume *Down Girl*: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/down-girl-9780190604981?cc=us&lang=en&>
- This article by Dr. Imperatori-Lee offers a brief introduction to the problems with **complementarian theology** in our Church: <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2016/11/06/women-priests-or-not-gendered-theology-hurting-church>

- **Ruth Everhart**'s book *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct* addresses the intersection of #MeToo and the Church:
<https://www.rutheverhart.com/book/the-metoo-reckoning/>
- New Testament scholar **Claudia Setzer** discusses the centrality of female witness to the resurrection in her article, "Excellent Women: Female Witness to the Resurrection":
<https://books.apple.com/ca/book/excellent-women-female-witness-to-the-resurrection/id512828421>