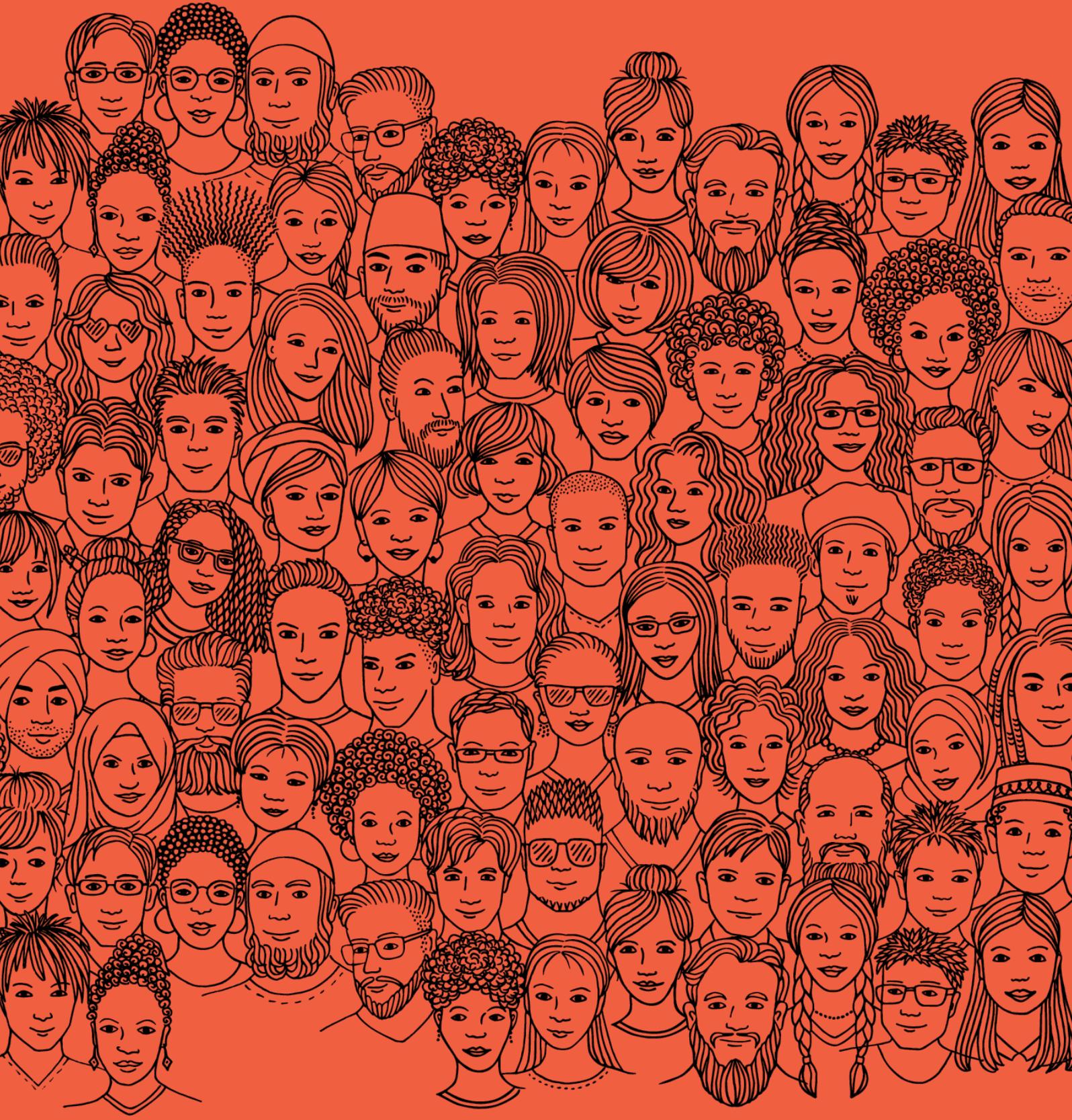


# BE A LOCAL AMBASSADOR

[WWW.OVERCOMINGSILENCE.COM](http://WWW.OVERCOMINGSILENCE.COM)



# WE NEED YOU TO BE AN AMBASSADOR AND HELP YOUR COMMUNITY OVERCOME SILENCE!\_

---

LEAD A

DISCUSSION  
GROUP

AT YOUR PARISH

---

---

SPEAK ABOUT

GENDER  
EQUALITY

AT YOUR SCHOOL

---

---

DOWNLOAD &

SHARE

OUR RESOURCES

---

---

JOIN OUR

THURSDAY  
PRAYER

**Thank you for downloading our ambassador guide to help raise awareness and create conversations locally in your community, parish, workplace or school about gender equality in the leadership of the Catholic Church.** Anyone can become an ambassador and the more voices that are raised up, the more urgent this issue becomes.

We need your help to collect photos and messages in your community to upload on the Overcoming Silence website. This will demonstrate unity and show that we are not alone in the want for women and lay people in leadership and decision making roles at all levels of the Catholic Church.

We understand that everyone has different levels of expertise, skills and talents, but what every person can do is speak up and help facilitate the necessary conversations in our communities to showcase the need for more equal and balanced leadership teams in one of the biggest institutions in the world.

This kit is intended to give you suggestions, action steps and background information to help you become an ambassador in your local community and through your network.

The time for change in the Catholic Church is now and we pray that this campaign will highlight the urgency, commitment and need for faithful women to become part of the decision-makers who shape the Catholic Church for current and future generations. We want to overcome the myth that Catholic leaders must be men. This is a product of history, not divine will. Together, we can be the prophets of an inclusive and equal Catholic Church in which women lead on an equal footing with men.

# OVERCOMING SILENCE CAMPAIGN GOALS

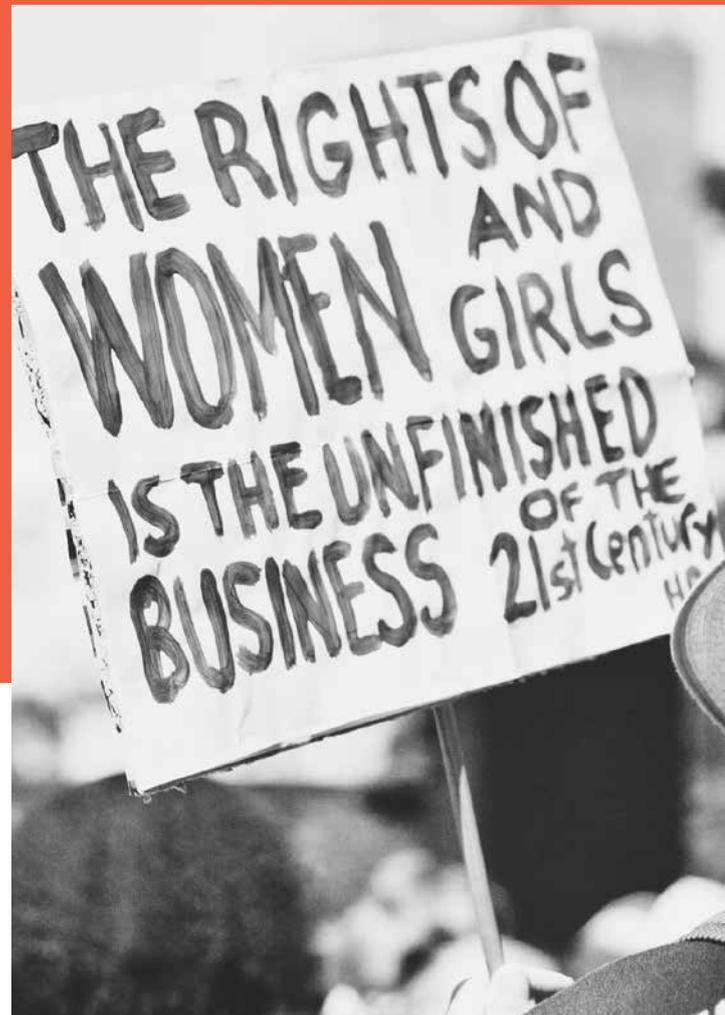
This campaign has 3 goals designed to begin bringing diverse women's voices into the Church at all leadership levels.

## 1 Women have voting rights in future synods.

The Church has a rich, ancient tradition of synods. In Rome such a communal body is called together periodically to discuss current issues in the Church and counsel the Pope. A precedent was set when Pope Francis named lay religious brothers as voting members of the 2014-15 Synod on Family and the 2018 Synod on Youth. Since then, voting in the Synod is no longer bound to the ordination to priesthood. Religious sisters have exactly the same standing according to Canon Law as religious brothers, yet none of them have ever been given the same voting right.

In 2018, a coalition of groups calling for votes for religious sisters gathered over 9,500 signatures in just two weeks. We continue this effort. In October 2019, the Synod on Amazonia is planned. We want to make sure that representatives of religious sisters vote. We firmly believe that this example can and must be extended also to lay women and men participating in the Synods. They should no longer be just observers, they should become full members with voting rights. Transparent procedures need to be developed to facilitate the selection of lay synod members. The Apostolic constitution which regulates how

synods work says that "like every human institution, the synod can be improved with passage of time." Including women as voting members is a great chance for the Catholic Church to develop a mechanism that will make its decision-making more inclusive, more diverse and more responsive to the real needs of the faithful.





## 2 Women begin assuming Vatican leadership roles

The Vatican (more specifically, Roman Curia) is the global administrative center of the Catholic Church. Its official role is to help the Pope to exercise his supreme leadership role. The Vatican is where decisions for the global Church are made. The Roman Curia consists of offices called Dicasteries, Congregations or Councils (you could think of different ministries or departments of a government). Within each office there are 3 levels of leadership roles:

1. **Prefect/President**
2. **Secretary**
3. **One or more Undersecretaries.**

In 2004, Pope John Paul II appointed the first woman to be an Undersecretary at the Congregation for Religious. Pope Benedict XVI affirmed this practice when he appointed a female Undersecretary at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 2010. Pope Francis has appointed three female undersecretaries so far. Pope Francis has also made history when he appointed the first non-ordained man to lead the Dicastery of Communication in 2018, showing that even the highest positions at the Roman Curia are not reserved just to clerics. Yet, no woman has been ever appointed to one of the two top levels of the Roman Curia.

Let's overcome this glass ceiling for women in the administration of Catholic Church. As the world evolves, research and case studies have shown time and time again that a diversity of leadership for any institution makes for positive results and culture. We will continue to lobby for transparent hiring practices and work with Catholic women who are qualified in not only their skills and expertise, but also their faith to lead at the highest levels of the Church.

**WE NEED TO  
TALK HONESTLY  
ABOUT WOMEN IN  
DECISION MAKING  
ROLES IN THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**ALINA OEHLER (GERMANY)**

**FAITHFUL WOMEN,  
GIFTED BY THE HOLY  
SPIRIT, ARE READY  
TO SERVE. IT IS  
TIME TO RECOGNISE  
THEIR VOCATION  
TO LEADERSHIP  
AND MINISTRY. OUR  
CHURCH NEEDS THEM  
FOR THE GOSPEL  
TO REACH NEW  
FRONTIERS**

**FATHER LUKE HANSEN SJ (USA)**



### **3 An official process of change to bring women to leadership roles at all levels in the Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church is the largest religious institution in the world. Our goals 1 and 2 offer concrete ways on how women can become part of the decision-making of the Church right away. Yet, these are just first steps. We Catholics have to have a wide-ranging, comprehensive conversation about how our Church can continue transforming in the 21st century. We have to reflect deeply on how power is distributed and decisions are made. The statements approved at the latest Synod in 2018 saying that participation of women in Church decision-making at all levels is “duty of justice” will remain hollow unless a global process gets underway to hear women’s voices, discuss practical solutions and establish clear plans of how we move towards inclusion of diverse women’s voices in the decision-making of the Catholic Church.

What could an open, consultative process for women in the Church look like? We must begin to discuss this now.

# ACTION STEPS FOR AMBASSADORS

First, we need you to take the main action we hope thousands of Catholics will take:

- a. Go to [www.overcomingsilence.com](http://www.overcomingsilence.com)
- b. Follow the steps to add your photo and message to our Church leaders
- c. Copy our campaign message: **“We need to talk honestly about women in decision making roles in the Catholic Church #overcomingsilence” or feel free to write your own.**

Your photo and message will automatically be added and counted as part of our global campaign.

## International Women’s Day 8th March 2020

We hope that over the coming year, thousands of Catholics will add their photo and message to this campaign. Keep posted with us as we plan an exciting event to bring this campaign to Pope Francis in Rome next year.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:



Join us in ‘Prayer on Thursday’. This prayer can be downloaded via our tool kit on the website and we encourage this prayer of equality to be shared and prayed every Thursday supporting all Catholics to be able to freely express their talents and vocations in their Church.



Keep an eye out for new resources from our tool kit and educate yourself about women in the decision-making of the Catholic Church. If you are a teacher or lecturer, use our resources in lesson-planning and expand your students’ horizons.



Share this campaign through your own words on your social media and invite your friends and family to join it. Help them take their photo and write their message to our Church leaders.



Write a blog or send an opinion piece to your local media (and to us) about why you think this campaign is important.



Create a discussion group in your school, parish, community group or university using our resources to discuss women’s roles in the Church. Be open minded as not all people in the group might agree straight away, but having a forum to speak freely and openly without judgement is the first step towards understanding how we can approach this with fellow Catholic members.



Take interest in the situation of your local community. Are lay people, especially women involved in leading it. Talk to your bishop or your parish priest about this campaign and get your parish involved.



Keep posted on the Voices of Faith social media for up to date news articles and updates from the campaign and share them with your network to continue the conversation  
*Facebook: @voicesoffaithwomen*  
*Twitter: @vofwomen*



**VOICES  
OF FAITH**

**NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

**We want to hear from you!**

For any questions or more information,  
please contact

**Stephanie Lorenzo**

**Communications Director, Voices of Faith**

**[steph.lorenzo@voicesoffaith.org](mailto:steph.lorenzo@voicesoffaith.org)**

**[www.overcomingsilence.com](http://www.overcomingsilence.com)**

