The Future Church

by John Allen, Jr.

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Book Discussion

5 hours Credit

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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)

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)

   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 21rst centuries. What does a shift from ad intra to ad extra mean?

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?

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.

6. **Trend Four – The New Demography** (pages 141-177)
   Discuss how fertility rates and immigration change the demographics of the Catholic Church.

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?

8. **Trend Six – The Biotech Revolution** (pages 217-255)
   What is biotechnology and what issues does the Church face in this area?

9. **Trend Seven – Globalization** (pages 256-297)
   What are the positives and negatives of globalization?
   What is Catholic teaching on globalization?

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?

11. **Trend Nine – Multipolarism** (pages 338-374)
    What is multipolarism and what does it mean for the Church?

12. **Trend Ten - Pentecostalism** (pages 375-413)
    What and where is Pentecostalism and how is it changing the Church, especially in Latin America?

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