

Pre and Post Conference Email communications

From Tony Biviano, Australia, Sept. 1, on behalf of Bishop Robinson

Your questions were not too direct just surprising given that I had responded to you and received Kaisers message stating he did not want to join forces as did others.

Bishop Robinson has a concern, as I do, that having many different agenda's will continue to weaken everyone's cause. We have tried to bring reforms groups together but have been unable to do so. So I do congratulate you on getting setting up the call.

I've attached an email that may explain why Geoff has not replied to you. He was aware of Kaiser's and your correspondence to me.

I will be on the call and will speak about Geoff's points below if you wish.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

From: Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

Subject: Meeting next Wednesday

Dear Tony,

I have to have an operation on my hand next Tuesday, so I would not be available for a conference call on Wednesday. I am happy that you be part of that call for me.

I am most willing to cooperate with other groups, but I have some reservations.

There are a number of reasons why I have concentrated on sexual abuse and would still wish to do so:

- 1) I was sexually abused as a young teenager and I have a terrible hatred of abuse. This is a powerful driving force in all my actions.
- 2) Abuse is killing the Church, and it will not be credible on any other subject until it has fully confronted abuse and done everything possible to eradicate it. Most other petitions, however important in themselves, seem trivial when put beside it.
- 3) It is the issue that arouses the strongest feelings in Catholic people, for their faith has been rocked. 110,000 people have signed a petition dealing specifically with abuse.
- 4) What is most important is not the kind of Church I want, but the kind of Church God wants, and any petition presented to the pope should reflect this. So it should be a petition that is not based on any form of self-interest, on what "I" want, but on reaching out to those in need. A petition concerning sexual abuse does this, and Pope Francis would be aware of it.

For these reasons, I am not willing to abandon abuse and support a petition that doesn't specifically mention it. To do this would also break faith with all those people who have signed this petition.

I have asked for a council, for I believe that would best accomplish the task, but I would be willing to compromise on this if I could be convinced that whatever was set up could and would do the job.

I have to add that I have a certain fear of a tendency of groups to use their weight to pressure others to do things their way. I cannot avoid watching for any signs of this.

Best wishes,

Geoff

From Jean Riorden, UK, Sept. 3, A Call to Action National Steering Group

A Call to Action is a very new movement, less than a year old, currently in a transitional stage, as we prepare for our first national conference in late October, the foundation of a Constitution and a National Delegate Council. With this in mind, you will appreciate that the Steering Group can unfortunately do little more than pass on your request, for deliberation by the newly-elected council later in the year. We are, like you, looking for reform in the institutional church and once our organisation has settled, our members might well vote to work with you for the good of the Church.

What we can do, however, is to reiterate our mission statement, with its emphasis on trust, respect and dialogue. This we send with all good wishes and every blessing.

A Call to Action- A Time for Dialogue

Mission Statement

We are a group of Catholics, some of whom are ordained, together by our love of Christ's church, and our anxiety about its future.

Still inspired by the Second Vatican Council we want to contribute fully to the life of our Church so that we may be a more effective sign of the Kingdom of God.

To do this, we believe that an atmosphere of openness and dialogue, both with each other and with our Bishops needs developing. We desire to create a climate of trust and respect for all where this dialogue may be fostered.

For more information see our website: acalltoaction.org.uk

Note: There are around 1,200 members, about a quarter of whom are clergy or religious, virtually all in the UK.

Forwarded from: Voice of the Faithful, Sept. 3, on behalf Of Voice of the Faithful

Note: This group has not agreed to join with us yet.



Update on VOTF

Bishop Selection

Initiative

September 4, 2013

As part of our ongoing effort to restore meaningful lay input into the selection of local bishops, Voice of the Faithful is asking Pope Francis to support demonstration models among the various national Councils of Bishops.

In a letter timed for receipt prior to the planned October meeting between the pope and bishops, President Mark Mullaney, on behalf of VOTF's Bishop Selection Committee, sent the request and a revised document to the Vatican last week.

The proposal outlines a mechanism for collecting lay input via projects the national bishop councils could conduct within their own countries.

Following a demonstration period, the Vatican would draw up new "best practices" for incorporating lay input into the recommendations sent prior to the pope's appointment of new bishops in dioceses.

Here are those documents:

www.votf.org

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[Letter from VOTF to Pope Francis](#)

[Furthering the New Evangelization: Consulting the Laity on Candidates for the Episcopacy](#)

From Brendan Butler, Ireland, Sept. 3, representing We Are Church, Ireland

I would add another issue:

That an amnesty /right of appeal be given to all theologians who have been canonically sanctioned since Vatican 2.

From Christian Weisner, Sept. 4, We Are Church, Germany

My name is Christian Weisner. Since 1995 I'm member of We are Church in Germany and at the same time media contact for the International Movement We are Church (IMWAC). I was part of the IMWAC delegation that was present at the American Catholic Council in Detroit Pentacost 2011. I will try to take part in today's telephone conference as representation of We are Church and as substitute of Dr. Martha Heizer, chair of the International Movement We are Church. I

Ressources of IMWAC

IMWAC was present in Rome during the Conclave 2005 und 2013 with several international experts and did intensive media work. In March 2013 we published a statement "Collegiality, Justice, Wisdom and Hope"
<http://www.imwac.net/413/index.php/activities/conclave-2013/72-presentation-7-march-2013> (also available in French, Italian, Portuguese and German).

Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich/Germany (that is the town where I'm living) is one of the eight Cardinals of the advisory group to reform the Roman Curia.

In August 2013 We are Church Germany and IMWAC released a press release "No reform of the curia behind closed doors!" <http://www.imwac.net/413/index.php/news/we-are-church-news-and-comment/137-no-reform-of-the-curia-behind-closed-doors>. His office confirmed that Cardinal Marx has received and read our statement. We will try to contact him (and the other seven Cardinals) again.

One of our best theological expert about Papacy and church reform is Prof. Hermann Haering from Tuebingen/Germany who has very good contact to Prof. Hans Kueng.

We are also in good contact with Dr. Thomas von Mitschke-Collande, a retired senior adviser of McKinsey, who has sent to us his ideas for the Reform of the Roman Curia.

IMWAC has listed several petitions for Pope Francis <http://www.imwac.net/413/index.php/news/petitions> but none of them was very successful so far. Many reform minded Christians are supporting the ideas of Francis but they are not prepared to sign a petition.

So we support the idea to write a letter to Pope Francis and to present our main ideas. But we are sceptical to receive a substantial numbers of INDIVIDUAL signatures. So I propose to sign this letter by as many reform GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS as possible.

From Valerie Stroud, Sept. 4, We Are Church UK

I attach a link to the KvBs

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jji7fjztnv5y7x/JTLixOSS_2

There are only five there but a number of other countries also made their referenda. It is now 16 to 18 years since that time and despite attempts to collect others they seem to be lost in the mists of time. We were also using paper to a large extent then which all adds to the difficulty of archiving.

It is important to note and probably this is the reason for the success of IMWAC that national cultural dispositions are respected. So you will see the overview of all the referenda in the Roman Declaration

<http://www.imwac.net/413/index.php/aboutus/the-roman-declaration>

and the Manifesto proclaimed a year later in Rome

<http://www.imwac.net/413/index.php/aboutus/imwac-manifesto>

Bearing in mind the principles in the Austrian KvB other countries wrote their own to suit their own circumstances. For example, in the UK it was decided we wanted to encourage people to find out more and reflect upon the issues so our Declaration is longer than many others. In Austria the emphasis was on something that was quick to read and which could be signed outside churches, in the street etc. In Austria and Germany it seems much more easy to set up a network of people to collect signatures in parishes.

Austria collected 500,000 signatures

Germany 1.3 million

The stimulus to these massive numbers was the Gröer scandal. As you have found in the US, sex abuse motivates people on a huge scale.

The rest of the world did not do as well but altogether we believe we had between 2 and 3 million people behind us when we took the wishes of many of the people of God to the Vatican.

We Are Church thinks in terms of the people of God. We are lay-led although we very much welcome the participation of clergy. Therefore if someone wanted to sign the KvB they were welcome to do so without revealing their status.

It is also important to note that Catholics are much more willing to say where they stand today although the parapet is still far too high for many. In 1995 – 97 fear was rife and with the appalling lack of adult catechesis, which still abounds, most Catholics were afraid to be disloyal to 'Father'. Because people feared reprisals and discrimination we had to promise that the signatures would remain secret. Hence we took the numbers to Rome without the reams of paper.

From Christian Weisner, We Are Church Germany, Sept. 4

First, let me thank you very, very much for bringing together so many reform groups! We certainly will bring in our resources and experiences in this historic moment of time in church and in the global world - just 50 years after Second Vatican Council.

Thanks for referring to IMWAC's five demands. I think until now they are really the best summary of all different reform ideas. During the last 18 years these brief five points were elaborated into many very concrete ideas, master plans and activities. Anyhow at this moment I think the first and second demands (participation and gender) are the key issues of "a church of brothers and sisters". I also like very much the demand of Tony that we should have ask for a climate of open dialogue within the church.

My English is not so good. So I found it hard to make any contributions to the telephone conference.

There are **four points I find important for the statement:**

- 1) I think we should not only talk about our "voice in decision making", but rather that we "are" the church, hopefully "a church of brothers and sisters".
- 2) I think we also have to say something about the role and tasks of Christian churches in the global world. WHY are we church? I think this is very important, especially with Pope Francis, and to reach out to groups from Southern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.
- 3) We should refer to the Second Vatican Council. I think almost all of our visions (maybe except women's ordination) are included in these documents. These visions have to be put into practice (and into a revision of canon law).
- 4) We should use a language that can be understood by people inside and outside the church. This is also important for any media work.

IMWAC will have it's next Council November 1-3 in Dublin/Ireland.

Please, see also the other longer mail I've sent to you today. Many thanks!

From Francois Brassard & Connie Kurtenbach, Corpus Canada, Sept. 4

If I had had more time (the Reform Event wanted responses no later than Sept. 5), I would have included your very reasoned and politically astute suggestion that the RC Church adopt the fairly successful electoral process for leadership candidates that exists in the Anglican, United and other Churches.

That being said, I would point out that ordained leadership roles do not require the maintenance of a clerical state/system. And because, as Joe said, 'hierarchical clericalism' is an evil condemned by Jesus, I suggested that the Reform Event administrators propose to the eight cardinals the abolition of the clerical system and its unjust distinction between clergy and laity. Also, while I agree that the distinction between ordained and non-ordained leadership roles is traditional within many Christian churches, including the RC Church, I think it would be wise and politic to avoid 'distinctions' of any type and concentrate positively on a wide range of 'commissioning' roles open to all candidates regardless of gender, marital state or sexual orientation (thus bypassing several conundrums, such as the 'ordination of women priests' or 'gay.'

Corpus Canada Mission Statement:

Who Are We?

We are a faith community of men and women empowered by our baptism in Jesus' Spirit to reach out to others in their need as Jesus did. We also provide support for married Roman Catholic priests, their family and friends.

Where Are We Going?

This faith community is dedicated to

- Renewal of ministries in the Church, including an ordained ministry open to men and women, married and unmarried;
- A vision of Church that includes all people who profess faith in Jesus Christ;
- Development of leadership among all the baptised in the Church;
- Promotion of a wholesome view of sexuality;
- Justice for all based on Gospel values.

Our message is a healing one and is directed to everyone, especially the marginalized in the Church. It is our hope to reach people through many ministries, and in a special way through the creation of small faith communities.

How Do We Get There?

Through a collegial approach based on consensus reached through communal discernment in the Spirit, we share our gifts that all creation might be transformed according to God's loving plan.

For more information, consult our website: www.corpuscanada.org

To view the latest issue of our on-line newsmagazine, go to the above website, click on "The Journal", then scroll down to 2013 #3.

In terms of Church Reform, Corpus Canada wholeheartedly supports the agenda outlined in your submission of August 31, 2013.

In further support of that agenda, Corpus Canada would propose specifically that Roman Catholic Church Administrative Reform must include a declaration abolishing the medieval classification of the baptized as belonging either to the clergy or the laity. This distinction is discriminatory. More to the point, the clerical system of power in the Church must be terminated. Leadership in the Church must be reformed in a manner more in keeping with the vision and practice that Jesus modeled.

From Bob Heineman, Call to Action, Sept. 4

I am thinking over the material that would best come from Call To Action. We don't frequently work in the realms of petitioning and issuing statements. We do have a large and involved membership, going back to 1976.

We have our annual conference -- the largest annual gathering of progressive Catholics: 1500 to 2500 participants yearly going back to 1990. We have 57 chapters around the country.

As an aside I hope you'll be able to attend this year's conference (Oct 31 - Nov 3 in Milwaukee) www.cta-usa.org/conference

Jim FitzGerald, CTA's Exec Director, will be the one to process all of this with our board and leadership. Fortunately, there is a national Board Meeting already scheduled for the weekend of Sept 13 - 15.

From Paula Ruddy, for Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, Sept. 4

Mary Beth and I joined in on the teleconference this morning, and we were both energized by the response from all quarters. We particularly admired the way you listened to all the opinions and crafted a sentence out of them. It sounds like everyone is on board. Chris is strong and her input was good. We were thinking you might have to distinguish the two meanings of "deliberative" and make sure it signifies having a voice in the decision-making. A common meaning is "reflective" or "thoughtful" and the voice that the people want is that, but more than that--an effective voice in the decision-making. It can't be equal to the bishops' voices in the sense of one person, one vote, but it can be collegial with theirs. That is where some form of elective accountability comes in to motivate them to be collegial. I hope you were happy with the outcome. I trust we will get instructions about where to send our materials?

I got a call early this morning from a friend who was on his way to emergency grandchild care, but he wanted to join the conversation and send a message to Pope Francis. He called the number too early and connected with someone from Germany who was also looking to join the call. Anyway I said I would send you his and his wife's message: " Dear Pope Francis. Please call off, in unambiguous language, any investigations of U.S. sisters and sisters in any other country where investigations may be underway." It touched me that your offer to give a voice to Catholic people reached into the heart of midwestern Bloomington, Minnesota, and caught the desire of these good people to come to the aid of the nuns.

You gave them hope that they could reach Pope Francis, and he evidently has given them hope that he will hear them. Hope is such a delicate thing, isn't it?

From Tony Biviano, representing Bishop Robinson's group, Australia, Sept 4

I wanted to congratulate you on the manner in which the call was conducted. You did a masterful job bringing all these [people and groups together. It was most encouraging to have so many people willing to talk and participate – and come together. From the start we have attempted to achieve this but have failed so I know how hard it was.

I have sent the minutes to Bishops, Robinson, Power and Morris for their feedback and approval to support the initiative and will ask Geoff if he would like to be on the drafting committee. I think he will be an asset as he does 'think like a bishop' and so be able to add value in using language that may be more acceptable to the Cardinals.

There is one point that is not on the agenda that I believe needs to be considered. There needs to be an awareness campaign developed that brings attention to the coming together of all these groups and the message that we are delivering to the cardinals so that the wider catholic population becomes aware. I believe it will also strengthen the campaign- and probably be one of the most evangelical actions the world has seen for some time.

To make it happen there will need to be press releases created for distribution to both catholic and secular media and concerted efforts by representatives all over the world to get the message out. I'm happy to be involved in this and would welcome others in other countries to do the same.

From Peter Wilkinson, Australia, Sept. 4

Thank you and your team for organizing the Conference Call link-up last night (Australian time). Sincere thanks also to Sheila Piper of ACC for facilitating the discussion.

In our discussion on governance and participation in decision-making within the Church, it was suggested that there needed to be 'structures' which enabled this.

I made comment on this during the call by referring to SYNODS in the Catholic Church. Over the past couple of years I have looked at this area of church governance in some detail (my report on Australian Synods 1844-2011 attached) and would like to add a few points that others may wish to consider (particularly Sr Chris Schenk of Future Church):

Synods have been an integral part of church governance since the time of the Apostles and have played a key role in how Catholics understand their faith, live it, and confront the issues of their times in the light of their understanding of the Gospel.

1. Synods are the earliest and traditional forums for collegial discussion, debate and decision-making in the Church. The first was the Council of Jerusalem around 50 AD recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (Ch. 15) and referred to by St Paul in his letter to the Galatians (Ch. 2). It is the template for all later synods. 'Synod' derives from the Greek *syn* meaning 'together' and *hodos* meaning 'road' or 'way' and signifies a 'coming together', 'assembly' or 'meeting'. It is synonymous with the Latin *concilium* or 'council' and in a generic sense the terms are interchangeable.
2. There are three types of church Synod or Council: a) Ecumenical, b) Particular, and c) Diocesan. In the English-speaking world we are familiar with the first, but not so familiar with the others.
3. **Particular Synods** can be **plenary (or national) or provincial** (for an ecclesiastical province covering more than one diocese). In the US the Synods and Councils of Baltimore (1791-1884) are examples of these types of Synod. Synods of this type were held frequently throughout the church from the 2nd century and continued throughout the Middle Ages. They became less frequent after the Council of Trent, but in 1917 the Code of Canon Law, seeking to revitalize them, made special provisions for their celebration (C. 281-292). A plenary council or synod could only be held with the authorization of the Supreme Pontiff, who would designate a delegate to convene and preside over it. Provincial councils or synods were to be convened at least every 20 years. Bishops' conferences or assemblies were also to be held in each province at least every 5 years, to deal with the problems of the dioceses and to prepare for the provincial synod. Since Vatican II plenary councils can be convened only if the episcopal conference deems one to be 'necessary or useful' and receives the approval of the Apostolic See (C. 439.1).
4. **Diocesan synods** were mandated at the 4th Lateran Council in 1215 AD, reinforced by the Council of Trent, and legislated for in the 1917 and 1983 Codes of Canon Law. The 1983 Code allows a bishop, after consulting his Council of Priests, to convene a diocesan synod whenever he considers it opportune.
5. **Vatican II called for synods 'to flourish with new vigour' and insisted that the laity have an active role in them'** (*Christus Dominus*, n.36).
6. Under the 1983 Code major changes have been implemented. Whereas before Vatican II all synods were exclusively male clerical assemblies with zero lay or female membership, **the new rules for particular and diocesan synods insist on a much more 'inclusive and gender diverse' membership**. Indeed, up to 50 percent of the total membership of a plenary synod can be priests and other members of the Christian faithful (C. 443.4). Diocesan synods are to include clerical, religious and lay members. Even ministers or members of other churches or ecclesial communities, which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, may be invited as observers (C. 463).
7. While the structures for synodal participation are now in place, there are some very strong ground rules surrounding the structures which prevent them from functioning in the way many reform groups would like.
8. The ground rules acting as real **barriers to more authentic co-responsibility and participation by all the faithful in decision making within the Church through synods** are:
 - a) particular and diocesan synods can to be **held only if the bishop or bishops determine that they are 'necessary, useful or opportune'**, and in the case of a plenary synod, if the Apostolic See approves. There is no provision for the faithful or clergy being able to 'call on' a synod; b) the **agenda for particular synods is tightly controlled**. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible for an matter to be discussed which the Apostolic See does not want to be discussed, either at local or national level. An agenda listing the ordination of married men, the role of the laity in the selection of bishops, greater availability of the 3rd Rite of Reconciliation (to name just a few less contentious issues) would almost certainly be countermanded by Rome; c) in all particular

and diocesan synods, **only the bishops or bishop has a deliberative vote**; all other participating members have a consultative vote only; d) the **acts or decisions of any particular or diocesan synod cannot be published or come into force until they have been prior approved by the Apostolic See**; e) the 1997 *Instruction on Diocesan Synods* insists that **all diocesan assemblies are to be held according to Canon Law**.

9. In recent years it would appear that **national Episcopal Conferences, functioning as 'quasi synods', have begun to increasingly usurp the proper function of particular synods**. In practice, what appears to be happening is that bishops now see their national Episcopal Conference as a more opportune, but less transparent and accountable, forum for governing the local Church in a nation. Episcopal Conferences can also restrict the participation of the laity and other clerics and religious to membership of associated bodies which have purely advisory roles. Experience shows that an Episcopal Conference can avoid calling a national or plenary synod by stating that 'it is not opportune', and avoid discussing or confronting some of the more contentious issues by saying 'it is beyond our competence'.

In looking for a new model of synod wherein members other than bishops can have a 'deliberative' vote, where the agenda might be opened up and contentious issues properly confronted, it may be worthwhile examining the General Synod of the Church of England (www.churchofengland.org/generalsynod) with its three Houses.

From Vivian Williams, Catholics for Renewal, Australia and associated with the Australian Coalition statement.

Thank you Janet, for such a prompt reporting of the Minutes. This is indeed a wonderful and exciting and hopefilled initiative. Thank you so much to organisers. I support the breadth and depth of dialogue.

I would love to abolish the lay/clerical divide, especially reference to 'laity'. Our common baptism is the starting point. I like Christine Schenk's suggestion that Vatican II has profile. Scripture is certainly the foundation, but our positive story as church, including a reading of the signs of the times, is integral to our identity as well.

And isn't this the time for us to be engaged in the appointment of bishops - with a dearth of visionary and intelligent leadership - certainly in our land.

Just as a suggestion, the book by Dr Orm Rush, an Australian Theologian: *The Eyes of Faith*, is an excellent expose of the history and understanding of the 'sensus fidelium'.

Thank you to all organisers. I look forward to the editorial team's progress.

From Elspeth O'Connor

Thank you for forwarding the minutes of the Teleconference call. I will add my comments for your perusal just as an individual as I have not consulted yet with other members of my group.

I think you did an excellent job in the short time available and while I do not agree with everything written there I agree with most in principle. I do not think the Church can ever be a Democracy but I would like to see it employ more democratic principles. I also do not agree with the No. 3 statement

from IMWAC Equal rights for men and women in the Church (e.g. women having access to all church offices) as I do not think the Church is ready to make this change. I think we need to concentrate on the "do-able" at this stage and other things are more important. However, the principle of equal treatment for all genders is important.

I would prefer to see more positive statements rather than "shoulds" and "oughts" which I think is language of the past and connotes imposition of will.

I very much like the idea of basing statements on the Scriptures and especially the Gospels.

I would also like to see a stronger statement re the Sexual Abuse in the Church for No. 4 of IMWAC statement.

The developing statement is good, then I would like to see some further "requests" rather than "demands" as the wording of demands would probably be more antagonistic!

These are my suggestions for what they are worth.

Well done and I continue to pray for the success of the petition and for Pope Francis to have a listening ear and the wisdom of the Spirit.

From Art Menu, Corpus Canada, Sept. 4

I am no fan of clericalism and would wish to see it abolished as much as you. The Church will always need leaders, and we should aim for a culture of leadership that produces servant-leaders who are accountable to the membership of the Church. As for what the reform movement can do, you have to start with a proposal that has some chance of being taken seriously by Pope Francis and his advisory group. I think it is unrealistic to try to leapfrog the non-RC churches. Let's aim for what these churches have proven workable in terms of church government, and would be a considerable advance over the current governmental system of the RC Church. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

All that being said I will support your efforts and pray for their success.

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From Paul Collins, Retired priest, Australia, author of *Papal Power*

This email is (1) to confirm my address – pco77760@bigpond.net.au – and to let you know that because of time differences I will probably be a bit out of sync with everyone because of time differences. Canberra, Australia is 15 hours ahead of US Eastern Time and 10 hours ahead of GMT (give or take an hour depending on who is on summer time).

(2) I also think that Chris Schenk's last dot point is correct; that that is our task. I also agree that the introductory statement is already too wordy and that it actually needs to be integrated into the letter we send.

(3) So I've attempted a very tentative first attempt at a draft introduction to the letter we send to Frank and the Cardinals. I've both attached it and added it below so that if there is any problem opening the attachment you have in the body of the email. I've tried to use at least some of the ideas from last night and from the minutes. Remember – this is just the introduction to the letter which lays down our basic principle which I thought emerged in the telephone hook-up. Please feel free to criticise, disagree, scrap, rewrite, or whatever this text. It is just a beginning and may be the wrong way to go altogether. Don't get concerned about my 'feelings'; remember I've been in the secular media for 30 years and the church for 60 – enough to toughen anyone up! The idea is that having established the principle of equality we then go into detail with the practical consequences of that, e.g. election of bishops, synods, etc., etc. Paul Collins. The text follows:

Dear Father Francis and Brother Cardinals,

We write to you because we are profoundly concerned that the Church in our countries is in deep trouble. We see many of our sisters and brothers abandon the Church in disappointment, shame and despair, and our young people turn away, sometimes in disgust. The clearest symptom of this crisis is sexual abuse which has led to a complete loss of the Church's credibility and which, in turn, makes it almost impossible to witness to the message of the Gospel.

However, in our experience, the underlying core of the crisis is deeper. Father Francis, you have spoken about the destructive nature of clericalism and of a Church obsessed with itself and its reputation. We suggest that these addictions have arisen precisely because we have lost the sense in Catholicism that we belong to a community of equal sisters and brothers called by the Spirit to live and proclaim the message of Jesus. We are all the People of God, the Body of Christ, and we are convinced that in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, the long-standing tradition of the Church, and the documents of the Second Vatican Council that all of us, lay and ordained, have an innate and inalienable right, deriving from our baptism, to have a genuine deliberative voice in the decision-making of our Church.

We believe that until we recover within Catholicism a sense of the equality of all believers and a recognition that all of us have God-given gifts which the Spirit uses to build-up the Body of Christ, we will continue to fail to pass on the Faith to future generations and to show the 'missionary zeal' that you, Father Francis, have spoken about.

From Sister Emelina Villegas, Philippines

I am very hopeful about the "expansiveness" that is happening in the church and I pray that we may feel it in our everyday life as Christians. I suggest that we emphasize that we are the BODY and CHRIST is our HEAD and as such, interconnected and interrelated. For a long time, this body has been distorted because it is heavily clerical. The lay people, especially women, although participating, remain to a large extent as "helpers" depending only on what the priests will say. Our lay people are ready to take up the challenge. They believe that they are missionaries and have a big role to play in the social and political life of society. I agree with the five points being discussed here. I hope we find the right way to bring them forward. May the Spirit continue to fire us!

From Geoff Harris, member of WAACSA, South Africa:

Note: Geoff is requesting to be on our drafting committee. Since we have no one representing South Africa, it would be well worth having him join us. Your thoughts?

Sorry I was unable to participate due to factors beyond my control. What a wonderful Spirit was present and expressed.

This discussion will hopefully prove to be an historic venture in the future of our beloved Church – and it is up to us to further the momentum and ensure it does not fizzle out like a damp squib! Therefore we need to also develop a strategy to ensure that the results of our 'labour-of-love', reach the right ears and are heeded – and are subsequently respected and implemented. Turning the lumbering, monolithic and bureaucratic 'tanker' that is the RC Church today, will take time, persistence and patience. Only God can build His Universe in seven days and nights!!!!

I would appreciate being included in the drafting of the statement and, while generally supporting the initial wording, suggest inclusion of Vat II (And some minor alterations and additions) as set out below:

Out of our committed love for our Church, in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel and Canons, and to allow us to pursue our missionary spirit more freely and effectively, we, the people of God – bishops, priests, religious, and laity - have an innate right, arising (?arising?) from our baptism, to have a deliberative voice in the decision-making of our Church as confirmed by ancient Tradition and the Spirit of Vatican II.

Designation:

1. Outcome of conference.
 2. Republic of South Africa.
 3. Single voice
 4. Catholic convert from 1963; member of WAACSA - but submission is personal and may not represent official view.
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From Tony Spencer: Member of ACTA, Clifton Diocese UK, and Hon. Secretary of the Pastoral Research Centre Trust

THE FIVE DEMANDS

Demand 1

'Separation of powers'

"The bishops and the Pope are law makers, judges and administrators at the same time (like monarchs)".

I strongly object to the phrase 'like monarchs'. It reflects the experience of the American Colonies in the late eighteenth century, when Britain was moving from the absolute monarchy of the early seventeenth century towards constitutional monarchy in the nineteenth century - and the experience of the autocratic monarchies of Europe which collapsed after the First World War. The North European monarchies today have succeeded in developing a harmony between democracy and monarchy by splitting the top role into two: the elected Head of the Executive and the monarchical Head of State. This avoids the difficulties encountered in democracies where these two roles are combined. For example, as the Presidents of the USA and France are **both Heads of State and Heads of the Executive** there are periodically very serious role strains: it is happening now. Combining these two roles in a democracy is very difficult. When party-political support for the Head of the Executive is more or less evenly balanced there may be almost half the electorate who have no confidence in the Head of State. In a paper entitled 'The future of the episcopal and papal roles', published in *IDOC International North American Edition*, 3 (9 May, 1970), and available for download on www.prct.gov.uk, I argued that the solution is to split the two roles. My conclusion, set out in a blog on the same website, is that the role of the Pope should be re-defined as purely expressive and legitimative. The role of head of the Church's international executive should be a bishop elected by a regular Synod, and his tenure should end with a vote of that Synod. The legislative function would be exercised by the Synod itself. This would have avoided the situation we have had to endure for decades when one man, the Pope, has been able to block every proposal brought to the Synod from national episcopal conferences.

This approach has equal relevance for diocesan Ordinaries. They would be the expressive and legitimative heads of their dioceses, but the executive heads would be appointed by Diocesan Pastoral Councils, who would also consider and approve any specifically diocesan legislation. Nationally, the expressive and legitimative function of the chairman of the National Episcopal Conference would be given to a person elected by the bishops. The head of the national executive would be a person (bishop, priest, religious or lay) elected by the National Pastoral Council, and national legislation would be subject to approval by the three houses of the National Pastoral Council. Our website: www.prct.org.uk

From Valerie Stroud, We Are Church UK, Sept. 4

Here are a couple more links from which to gain information:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vbel0mef4locvz2/nkJxZgxlVY>

This is the liturgy for the 1997 Gathering in Rome when we presented our letter and a reminder, which contains the original letter, sent to the Pope when we did not get a reply.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/g1fpseyx22nt1l6/SwI5oy1k6i>

These are the information bulletins which our first Spokesperson, Elfriede Harth, coordinated during 1997.

Most of the other information is on www.imwac.net/int or the main site at www.we-are-church.org

From Brendan Butler, We Are Church Ireland, Sept. 4

Good to be part of our universal prophetic reform movement . Here is a suggestion on the preamble justifying our communication on three levels , the mission of Jesus Vatican 2 and Canon law. Then we can express the five aims as outlined so succinctly already .

Later in this second half of the document I would also like to include a reference that ‘ Our commitment to justice in the world society is compromised and may be seen to be a contradiction when injustice exists with the Communion of Believers.’

Out of our committed love for our Church, in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel, and to allow us to pursue our missionary spirit more effectively, the people of God - priests, religious, and laity - have an innate right arising from our baptism to have a deliberative voice in the decision making of our Church.

Lumen Gentium (12) states that ‘The holy People of God share also in Christ’s prophetic office’ and we believe we are expressing the ‘Sensus Fidei’ in this communication.

Also in accord with Canon law 212 .3 we are exercising our canonical right and duty to ‘express our opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church’ .

From Rosse, Sept 5:

Trust me here/ re: article 5 of "discussion". It is not difficult at all for homosexuals to "live up to Christian principles" as this paragraph states. Indeed we are one of many groups holding the church together on local levels all over the world. In a movement seeking equality I feel mocked and disrespected by this paragraph and do now understand that I was mistaken for adding my name to a repressive group of alleged reformers.

From Nancy and Steve Pluta, Sept. 5

Thank you for such a clear presentation of the minutes of yesterday's teleconference. My husband and I are most grateful for all who are contributing in any way whatsoever and will be doing our part in spreading the news of all that is happening aa well in joining in prayer for all of us to continue !

From Clifford Maier, Sept. 5

Fabulous-----keep going and I truly believe God is with you---and all of us

From Janet Hauter, American Catholic Council, Sept 5

To be decided:

1. How to use the IMWAC five points? *My experience in working with large groups is that together they can produce a solid theme but may lack the semantic punch needed to have a decision maker/s get motivated to discuss it further and implement. We are at that moment, a moment to take the best of ourselves to influence and persuade in a way to be heard and heard in a new way. I suggest we use the five points as a springboard for our conversation preferably launched today as time is of the essence. For instance:*

Are we prepared to move from a reform mode thinking to a salesmanship thinking?

Are we prepared to become the "thought leaders" that propose to deliver value to Francis and the institution from "outside the box" of hierarchical input which predictably is same old, same old.

- D *Do the 5 points represent well the issues we want presented and in the language that will influence action?*

Do they influence and persuade?

Do they need wordsmithing for "the sell"?

Do they say enough? Not enough?

Do they need a contextual introduction so that when read, the reader is where we want him/them to be?

Where do they fit in the packet?

I believe they, or their constructs, offer the best salesmanship by appearing front and center in the letter while the packet offers evidence that the Baptized continue to try to influence new thinking.

The semi-final statement will need to be edited to create a final item to be placed on the agenda of Pope Francis

I see the edited semi-final statement which I believe will have the 5 points or some such as the raison d'être for the letter, the agenda, etc. It a foundational piece and has the same priority as an executive summary might have in a proposal, which is generally written AFTER the whole proposal is developed.

3. The delegation is developing a cover letter that reflects many of the thoughts expressed in the call today.

Covered above, I believe.

4. Also included as back up to the cover letter will be the summary details of: petitions, referendums, outcomes of conferences, mission statements, etc. sent in by various reform groups.

The packet is like a lawyer's evidence that reform initiative will continue and we are sharing this openly to be transparent and accountable for work already done.

5. The value of the backup data is to demonstrate the issues that have been raised over the years, the number of supporters of each petition, their demographics, and their status (Catholic, former Catholic, priest, religious, other Christian, non-Christian). With all the data that has been mentioned in various emails, especially those from IMWAC, we should easily have 3 million people who will be counted in our total number of supporters for reform. Speaking in one voice and having a large number of supporters is what it will take to gain the attention of the Vatican. *Coupled, I believe, with a powerful position statement that demonstrates that the People of God are the Church and are stakeholders in a dysfunctional institution which we currently support financially. (Insider comment: Launching this letter and packet puts us in a category of change agents in the institution making clear throughout that we are not about changing dogma for the 8 traditionalists who will read it.)*