

**Sent:** Catholic Church Reform [info@catholicchurchreform.com]  
Friday, October 18, 2013 5:45 PM  
**To:** rene@yarnell.com  
**Subject:** Approval from all supporters of Press Release, strategy, and process



To all supporters of our coalition -

You are receiving this email if you represent a church reform group or if you are an individual who signed the open letter to Pope Francis and his Council. We are proposing three items for your consideration: (1) a process, (2) a strategy, and (3) a press release.

## Proposed Strategy

We are coming to you with our proposals for our next steps between now and February.

1. Through a press release, we make it known that we are aligned with the vision and spirit of Francis;
2. We communicate with bishops in our respective parts of the world to encourage, or if need be, pressure our bishops to do the same;
3. We begin now to gather data from the interviews Francis has given to determine his priorities and begin drafting a response, a kind of dialogue with him, offering concrete proposals around his issues;
4. This 3rd step is proposed to be the foundation for our next letter to the Pope and his council to be sent prior to their December 3rd meeting; this will be ready for your approval by the end of this month.
5. Based on the outcome of the December meeting, we plan to send another letter prior to the February meeting scheduled by Francis with his council.

## Draft Press Release

The following is our draft proposal submitted by the drafting committee and edited by representatives of church groups for your consideration. Now it is coming out again to all supporters - both individual and groups. The open letter is part of the press release and not separate from it. Without it, the press release was a continuous quote from the contact person as to what our plans were next. This doesn't make for a good press release. So these two items would be released together as one press release. Since sending this out to the media is discretionary and will be used only by those who choose to release it, we will

make no mention of the number of those signing - only that it is supported by a coalition of reform supporters and sent out by a specific church organization or member.

## **Press Release For Immediate Release**

### **Open Letter to Pope Francis**

You have given us hope, both by your words and example, in setting a positive new tone for co-creating a compassionate Church following the example of Jesus Christ. We are further encouraged to hear that our proposed topic of acknowledging the roles and responsibilities of the laity was discussed at your recent meeting with the eight Cardinals.

As adult baptized Catholics taking our responsibility seriously for the life and mission of our Communion in the Church, it is right that we, the laity, be involved in discussing our co-responsible role in the Church. Because we had no actual representation at your meeting nor any opportunity for dialogue at this stage, we, as a coalition of worldwide church organizations, are developing a proposal with concrete suggestions for the role of the laity for potential inclusion in your December agenda.

Secondly, in a spirit of collegial cooperation, we are sending invitations to bishops around the world to dialogue with us on the role and responsibilities of the laity. We are supportive of your definition clarifying the kind of bishops you seek - bishops who are "close to the people, fathers and brothers ... not having the psychology of princes."

We remain hopeful that the structural and systemic changes being considered will result in making effective the vision that the people ARE the Church (Vatican II) so that we are united in a visible, common mission."

Signed by a coalition of Catholics and worldwide church organizations

### **Catholic Organizations Approach Bishops for Dialogue**

A week after Pope Francis convened a meeting of eight cardinal advisors, a coalition of over a hundred Catholic Church organizations have delivered a letter to the pope affirming his efforts to recognize the role the laity should have in the church and inviting bishops worldwide to dialogue on this initiative.

Before Pope Francis convenes his December 3 - 5 meeting with his advisors, the coalition is working with lay people, bishops, priests, and religious from around the world to ensure that the baptized be given their proper role in the governance of the Church.

Encouraged by the fact that their requested topic was discussed at Pope Francis' October meeting, they are developing a proposal with data received during the interim for the Holy Father's December agenda.

In recent remarks to the press, Vatican spokesman Fr. Federico Lombardi said the role of the laity needs to be "adequately and effectively recognized and followed in the governance of the church." Lombardi underscored the fact that most of the Catholic Church's 1.2 billion members are laypeople, yet he concurs that they have no representation in the Vatican.

"Pope Francis has set a positive new tone for the church governance in recent press interviews," said \_\_\_\_\_ representing \_\_\_\_\_. "It is only right that we, as adult lay members, be involved in discussing our role in the Church. We also need to engage in full dialogue with the bishops to discuss the direction the pope is leading us and to collaborate in our common mission for living the Good News in the Church and in the world."

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Note: If you want to send the press release out but do not want to be the contact person, you are welcomed to make me the contact: Rene Reid 775-772-1210.

## Proposed Process

We have had lengthy discussions among our core group evaluating the process used with the first letter to the pope. We have explored extensively how organizations can balance their need for processing and consulting members, particularly with larger organizations, while also meeting the time criteria of agendas set by the Pope. One of our primary objectives is to be the democratic Church we are urging Pope Francis to make our Church become. Yet we must balance this with gathering input in a timely manner. It has been suggested that we have one process for approving a press release and another for approving a letter that will be delivered to Pope Francis.

**For a press release** or a similar matter that does not involve a direct communication with the pope, it is being proposed that we follow this process:

1. Core group determines the proposed next steps and turns the item needed to be written over to the drafting committee.
2. The drafting committee submits the draft to the contacts representing church reform groups.
3. Once changes have been included by the reform organizations (currently about 109 groups), this version goes out again to the to the reform organizations and also now to individual supporters, currently about 6000. (This is the step we are now taking in this newsletter).
4. Once individuals have had an opportunity to approve or offer their suggestions, these proposed changes will be sent out giving all supporters - both individuals and groups - the opportunity for approval or disapproval.
5. If individuals accept the proposals as submitted, the press release is immediately posted and available for use by anyone who chooses to send it out.

**For a letter being delivered to the Pope**, we would have one more step required:

6. Every individual must sign the letter and church reform organizations must give their explicit permission to have their name included.

As you can see, this is an inclusive, transparent, democratic and accountable process. To make it work, we need representatives of groups to use the most expeditious means of communicating with their membership. Hopefully, most groups can use electronic means of communicating via the Internet. All this being said, *please let us know if you have suggestions to improve this process.*

Church organizations have had the past week to offer their suggestions. We now present these three items: **process, strategy, and press release** to all supporters for your consideration and request your feedback within 72 hours: October 21st.

To simplify the process, it would be helpful if you do the following:

**If you approve of this plan in its entirety**, there is no need to respond. In fact it would be helpful if you not respond so as not to jam up our inbox. Simply wait for the next notification that we have reached an agreement and are ready to post the press release.

**If you need to translate this**, the newsletter is posted on our website. For non-English speaking members, please go to our website [www.CatholicChurchReform.com](http://www.CatholicChurchReform.com). Click on "Translate this Website" on the top left of the Home page. Then click on the Newsletter tab and you will be able to read this Newsletter in your language. It is a Google translation and therefor not perfect but understandable.

Espanol: Si necesita traducir esto, el boletín se publicará en nuestro sitio web. Para los miembros que no hablan inglés, por favor visite nuestro sitio web [www.CatholicChurchReform.com](http://www.CatholicChurchReform.com). Haga clic en "Traducir esta página Web" en la parte superior izquierda de la página principal. A continuación, haga clic en la ficha Newsletter y serás capaz de leer este boletín en su idioma. Se trata de una traducción de Google y para ello no es perfecto, pero comprensible.

**If you have suggestions to offer** to the strategy, the process, or the wording of the press release, please respond to [info@CatholicChurchReform.com](mailto:info@CatholicChurchReform.com). We welcome all suggestions.

## Core Group and Drafting Committee

**The core group** has formed itself, consisting of those who have come forth to volunteer, who represent a large organization, who have been nominated, or have offered to help with the workload. If you would like to be part of the core group in making early-on proposals or have someone you'd like to nominate, please let us know at [info@CatholicChurchReform.com](mailto:info@CatholicChurchReform.com). We'd like to have a fair representation from all parts of the world. As yet we have no one from Asia and only one from Latin America.

**The drafting sub-committee** members currently working on the next letter to Pope Francis targeting his December meeting with his council are the following: Geoff Harris from South Africa; John Buggy from Australia Reforming Catholics; Brendan Butler with

IMWAC Ireland; Mary Ellen Chown with Catholic Network for Women's Equality in Canada; Charles McMahon (Pennsylvania) with Voice of the Faithful and American Catholic Council; Raquel Mallavibarrena with Corriente Somos Iglesia, Redes Cristianas, and IMWAC Spain; Jose Maria Vigil, author from Panama; Peter Johnstone, Catholics for Renewal Australia; and Ed Schreurs with Open Church Alliance in Amsterdam. If you would like to join the drafting committee or nominate someone, please email [info@CatholicChurchReform.com](mailto:info@CatholicChurchReform.com).

## Model Letter to Bishops

You are encouraged to reach out to the bishops in your part of the world. A suggestion came in from Marie Foley with Voice of the Faithful in Santa Barbara that we add quotes from Pope Francis. Hopefully, this will address the issues with bishops no matter where they stand with the pope. Physical addresses are provided on the internet. Or contact us and we will help research this for you. The following is a model letter. There is no need to approve it. It is simply provided for you to use or to adapt to your own personal needs.

Dear Bishop \_\_\_\_\_,

We are sharing with you the letter sent to Pope Francis and his eight advisors prior to their October 1-3 meeting. It was encouraging to learn that our proposed topic, the role and responsibilities of the laity in the church and in the world, was discussed. We intend to follow up with a proposal for the meeting in December with data gathered in the interim. As Pope Francis has often said, constructive dialogue is essential in resolving critical issues.

In addressing Bishops in South America, Pope Francis raised these questions: "Is pastoral discernment a habitual criterion, through the use of Diocesan Councils? Do such Councils and Parish Councils, whether pastoral or financial, provide real opportunities for lay people to participate in pastoral consultation, organization and planning? The good functioning of these Councils is critical. I believe that on this score, we are far behind." And elsewhere he raised these questions: "As pastors, bishops and priests, are we conscious and convinced of the mission of the lay faithful and do we give them the freedom to continue discerning, in a way befitting their growth as disciples, the mission which the Lord has entrusted to them? Do we support them and accompany them, overcoming the temptation to manipulate them or infantilize them? Are we constantly open to letting ourselves be challenged in our efforts to advance the good of the Church and her mission in the world?"

In light of these questions raised by Pope Francis, we invite you to dialogue with us about the role and responsibility of the laity and more specifically, the themes that are foundational to our dialogue and representative of the *sensus fidelium*:

1. A Church that embodies the radical justice of the Kingdom of God in the world.
2. A Church that welcomes open dialogue among its members.
3. A Church that recognizes the fundamental equality of its members.
4. A Church with greater participation of the baptized in governance and that practices the highest standards of governance as an example to the world.

5. A Church that effectively confronts and prevents crimes within its ranks, in particular sexual abuse.
6. A Church that searches for the full ecumenical communion with all churches and the macro-ecumenical solidarity with all humanity.

We are eager to hear your perspectives on these critical issues raised by Pope Francis and by our coalition. We are sending this letter to all the bishops of (insert country here) as well as other bishops throughout the world to learn where we common ground. We look forward to hearing from you and if you would prefer, we would be happy to arrange a meeting with you with local representatives from our group.

In Christ,

Name of sender  
On behalf of a coalition of Catholics and organizations worldwide

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Please continue to share our worldwide coalition with other reform groups of whom you are aware. It is important that we keep growing the list of supporting organizations.

We have undertaken a major project that is not without its challenges. As one of our supporters Geoff Harris from South Africa said: "Complete and utter consensus is almost impossible to achieve no matter how democratic we wish to be!" Yet we know we have begun something good, albeit not perfect. And there is no doubt that it is Spirit driven. So let us continue to share our thoughts, and to seek solutions. Moving beyond the challenges that could divide us, let's move forward to work together on what unites us.

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