



December 13, 2013

To all supporters of Catholic Church Reform:

You are receiving this newsletter if you have supported one of the letters to Pope Francis. Our third letter is now ready for your approval.

Status of 2nd Letter to Pope Francis

The 2nd letter to Pope Francis and copies for his council of eight were sent out on November 23rd and we have confirmation that each one was delivered. The packet for Pope Francis was hand-delivered to his Casa Santa Marta residence. We eagerly await a response from Pope Francis.

Strategy of the three letters to Pope Francis

Our first letter to Pope Francis, delivered for his October meeting with his council, requested that our rights and responsibilities to speak out for the good of our Church be acknowledged. Our second letter, delivered for the pope's December meeting, requested that he enter into dialogue with us and that he pave the way for better channels of communication with our bishops by offering explicit directives to them to utilize Diocesan Synods and Pastoral Councils. Our next letter - what will be our 3rd and delivered prior to Francis' February 17 - 19 meeting with his council - is requesting inclusion of lay Catholics in the Extraordinary Synod on Family Life scheduled to run for 2 weeks beginning October 5, 2014. The draft is now ready for you editorial suggestions. Please see details below.

Exploring the possibility of holding a Shadow Synod

Preliminary discussions are going on among various reform groups around the world about holding a Shadow Synod to correlate to that called by the Vatican in 2014 and to hold another 2015 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II. In our discussion, it was suggested that our first gathering be held in Rome for 2 or 3 days just prior to the start of the October 5th 2014 Extraordinary Synod called by Pope Francis. Why consider doing this? Our intent in establishing a Shadow Synod is to work under the leadership of the International Movement We Are Church who are experienced in holding Shadow Synods and to join together with other reform organizations so that we are unified throughout the world in making plans for such a momentous worldwide endeavor:

(1) We are taking a proactive step - as opposed to waiting for an invitation - acting as responsible Catholics concerned for the good of our Church as it affects our family lives and

to invite the pope and members of the hierarchy to join us at our conference;

(2) In the event that we are invited to participate in the Synod called by Pope Francis, by holding our own meeting first, we will be better prepared to truly represent lay Catholics who, unlike the bishops, actually live as families in all its various forms;

(3) If, sadly, we are excluded from the Vatican Synod, we will be prepared to have proposals to submit to the pope and his council for their consideration;

(4) By holding our gathering prior to the start of the Extraordinary Synod, we will have ample opportunity for interaction with the Media who will already be gathered in Rome with little else to write about prior to the start of the Vatican Synod.

We welcome your input regarding such an endeavor. As communications continue, we will keep you informed of further discussions. If you know of other church reform groups who may want to be involved with this, please pass the word on. It is more critical than ever before that all church reform groups be united on plans for such huge undertakings, namely, for reform groups to take the lead in initiating a conference in October 2014 and joining together to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the closing of Vatican II in 2015.

3rd Letter to Pope Francis ready for editorial suggestions

Please read the draft of the 3rd letter to Pope Francis and offer your editorial suggestions by December 15. The suggestions will then go back to the drafting committee for final approval and will be posted for signing. We will have until early February to gather support for this letter to arrive prior to February 17, the start of the next meeting of Francis with his council.

Those currently serving on the drafting committee went through many drafts to come up with this version being submitted. Our previous two letters have been a buildup to this 3rd and most important letter. Without a doubt we feel that the Holy Spirit was heavily active on this committee (holyspirit@trinity.god being included on our email correspondence). Because of the critical importance of our request in this letter, namely lay participation in the Extraordinary Synod on family life, we hope that both Catholics and church organizations will join with us in this request. It is so very important that we present a united front.

Members of the drafting committee are:

John Buggy, Australian Reforming Catholics

Brendan Butler, We are Church, Ireland

Mary Ellen Chown, Catholic Network for Women's Equality, Canada

Clyde Christofferson, attorney and reformer, U.S.

Geoff Harris, member of We Are All Church South Africa

Janet Hauter, American Catholic Council, U.S.

Peter Johnstone, Catholics for Renewal, Australia

Raquel Mallavibarrena, Redes Cristianas and We Are Church, Spain

Rene Reid, Catholic Church Reform, U.S.

Nessan Vaughan, reformer, Ireland
Peter Wilkinson, Catholics for Renewal, Australia

Report on the U. S. Survey from Call to Action

The following is a report from Jim Fitzgerald, executive director of CTA:

"Over 12,000 individuals have responded to the Vatican's survey using our current online version created by members of COR (Catholic Organizations for Renewal); countless more have called their diocese to ask them about the effort. Now, many dioceses are scrambling to make some version of the survey questions available.

In this season of hope-filled waiting, I am encouraged that Pope Francis is seeking input from you and me in preparation for the Synod on the Family. While we continue to stretch our church to be more just and inclusive, it gives me hope that a window is opening in our church.

Will you join me in pushing
this window open wider?

If you have not already done so, take a moment to answer the survey, share it, then call your diocese and ask them how they plan to prepare for the Synod.

The hunger of Catholics to be heard was immediately apparent in response to news of the survey - let's make sure to keep that energy going and use this moment to build a better church!"

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