



December 20, 2013

To all supporters of Catholic Church Reform:

This Newsletter is on our website and able to be translated into all languages: <http://www.catholicchurchreform.com/newsletters.html>. Just click on "Translate this website into other languages" in the top left corner and select your language.

En español: Este boletín está en nuestra web y podrá ser traducido: <http://www.catholicchurchreform.com/newsletters.html>. Simplemente haga clic en "Traducir esta página web a otros idiomas" en la esquina superior izquierda.

Our third letter to Pope Francis is now ready for signing

If ever we need to be united and speaking with one very strong and clear voice, it is now. We have until early February to collect signatures. If you represent a church group, this should provide ample time to clear approval with your board. Once this is done, just [email](#) us your support and details of your group if you've not given them before. This letter lays the foundation for our next steps as a united network - what will be the most momentous and relevant steps yet. Please read the letter and, if you agree, join us in signing and supporting its message: <http://www.catholicchurchreform.com/letterNew3.html>

The Three Letter Campaign

As many of you know, we have been committed in our letter campaign to share a genuine "sense of the faithful" with Pope Francis, to request our rightful place to participate in the decision-making of our Church, to engage in dialogue with him, and to do everything in our power to make him and his council aware of the urgency to have families represented at their October, 2014 family synod. While releasing a questionnaire was a good first step, we estimate that less than 1% of the baptized worldwide found it possible to respond. Our advisory group feels that we need to go further to raise the awareness of Pope Francis and his council, stressing the priority of holistically dealing with the full spectrum of issues when discussing the joys, pains, and struggles of living as Christian families in all their various forms in today's world.

We laud Pope Francis for engaging in a wholesome encounter with Catholics and non-Catholics alike and we recognize our need to be proactive, supportive, and respectful in the delivery of our message. To date, we have not yet heard from Pope Francis directly though we have confirmation that our letters have been delivered. We remain more than hopeful that we will receive a response.

Beyond the questionnaire, what else might be done to solicit and incorporate the views of the faithful?

There seems to be a widespread agreement among our advisory group and other reform groups that a meeting of the laity in Rome needs to happen and it should be just prior to the start of the Extraordinary Synod . We are told that IMWAC has a committee formed and has every intention of running a 2014 Shadow Synod. They have already organized at least two Shadow Synods in Rome as well as maintained a very productive presence at the last two Conclaves. Within its ranks are experienced personnel with a lot of expertise in these things. CCR has indicated that we are more than happy for IMWAC to take the lead and we've offered our help and desire to participate in it.

For weeks, we have been discussing the need for a parallel synod in Rome (early October, 2014) just prior to the Pope's synod to discuss issues related to family life that reflect the views of the baptized and where they differ from current church teaching. It has been suggested this gathering be referred to as a Synchronic Synod. Synchronicity is the experience of two or more events that are apparently unrelated, yet are experienced as occurring together in a meaningful manner. While the discussions are at an early stage, here are some of the ideas under consideration. Let me reinforce that these matters are merely under discussion. No definite plans have been set. We want to gain a sense of all reform supporters as to the feasibility of such an endeavor and of your willingness to participate on some level.

While the questionnaire was considered a good first step, our advisory group feels that more direct involvement of the faithful is needed. In order to prepare more fully for the Extraordinary Synod of 2014 called by Pope Francis, two action steps are under consideration by our advisors: (1) **holding regional meetings throughout the world** ideally working with the local bishop but, if that option is declined, to go forward with lay-initiated regional meetings to discuss family life in the context of the church's teaching and where our views differ from the current institutional church on living as Christian families; (2) tallying the results of these regional meetings and present them at our **Synchronic Synod in Rome held just prior to the start of the Vatican Synod.**

The reasoning behind these deliberations is that an all male clerical and presumably celibate group of bishops have no personal experience of family life today. Given that the agenda topic for the synod called by Pope Francis is family life in the context of church teaching, it is strongly felt that families need to have an opportunity to represent themselves offering realistic views based on living as Christian families and not based on theological ideals and abstractions.

Holding something along the lines of a synchronic synod prior to the start of the Vatican-called synod keeps our options open whether or not we are invited to participate in Pope Francis' synod.

If families are included, holding our own meeting first will allow us to be better prepared. If, sadly, families are excluded from their meeting, it will allow us to have a written summary of all the meetings held throughout the world to hand-deliver to Pope Francis in time for the opening of their synod on the family. More about this in the next newsletter.

Need Volunteer help and participation

If such an undertaking is to proceed, we would work with other reform groups to solicit the involvement of authorities on the various aspects of family life. Between now and the Synchronic Synod, CCR focus will be coordinating the regional meetings and offering position papers and a tallied report of these meetings to offer for use at the meeting in Rome. If these plans come to fruition, we will post a signup sheet with a database to invite volunteers to join with us in this monumental undertaking. The kind of help we'd need will include forming committees to carry out each of the needed tasks, which might include:

1. working with other reform groups to select the authorities who would write brief position papers to be used at the regional meetings. (These position papers would serve as the regional agenda topics that embrace living as Christian families;
2. seeking volunteers to organize the regional meetings worldwide;
3. providing guidelines to the regional leaders who volunteer to organize their meeting (including creating standardized agendas and standardized online report forms);
4. tallying the results of the regional meetings (a massive undertaking);
5. Managing the CCR Facebook page;
6. Managing the CCR twitter account.

Much more will follow on this as discussions continue.

Window appears to be opening with Vatican communication

1. Call to Action reports that 16,000 people completed the U. S. COR-sponsored online survey and countless more called their diocese to ask them about the effort. As a result, many dioceses scrambled at the last minute to make some version of the survey questions available.

2. Anthony Padovano, the representative for We Are Church U. S., reports that there is an astonishing new climate in the Vatican. Several reform groups have been working on making arrangements for a 2015 Council 50 meeting in Rome to commemorate the 50th year of the closing of Vatican II. These groups are having a planning session this March in Rome and contacted the newly appointed Vatican Secretary of State, Archbishop Pietro Parolin, to inform him of their plans. He said he would very much like to meet with them while they're in Rome and gave them his e-mail and phone # to be sure that they stay in touch!!! As you may know, the Secretary of State is often called the deputy pope, clearly the most influential person after the Pope.