

Catholic Church Reform Minutes

Worldwide Teleconference Call

Wednesday, 4th September 2013

10:00 a.m. Eastern (U.S.)
Call in #: 712-432-0080
Access Code: 1031413#

To all who are interested in reform of our Church:

Here are the minutes of today's teleconference call. Time did not permit us to get to the second part of our discussion, namely, the support documents that should be included as back up to the overriding item being placed on the pope's agenda for his scheduled meeting with his cardinal advisers, October 1 -3. If you have such documentation that you would like to see included in our packet, please send the summary - only the summary - to us in the following format:

- 1. topic of the petition, referendum, outcome of conference, mission statement, etc.*
- 2. the geographical regions of the signers*
- 3. the total number of signers*
- 4. the status of the signers, if possible (Catholic, former Catholic, priest, religious, other Christian, non-Christian)*

As the draft committee completes their work reaching an agreed-upon draft of the cover letter and documents to be included, this will be sent out to everyone for your approval. This packet will be hand-delivered to the pope and mailed to his cardinal advisers, and others specified by supporters.

Prayer: Fr. Tony Flannery (Association of Catholic Priests: Ireland)
Thank you, Tony!

Purpose of the call:

To co-develop a strategically inclusive reform statement/s that widely represents the spirit of the collective reform movement modeling the values of Vatican II.

(Rene Reid)

Rene opened the call welcoming all and inviting us to develop an inclusive statement mindful that we are all members of the same body and that body has many parts. She proposed consideration of two theories of evolution: The Darwinian theory is reflective that humanity has evolved based on a "survival of the fittest" concept whereas the Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck's theory proposes that we have evolved because all organisms are in a cooperative interaction with one another, the stronger cells helping the weaker cells to contribute their needed and vital part to the whole. In this call, we are working toward bringing Lamarck's model to life.

Open Discussion:

Proposed: Sr. Christine Schenk, csj of Future Church had suggested that the Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (CBRR) might serve as a starting point: <http://americancatholiccouncil.org/bill-of-rights>). After further consideration, Chris said she had yet another recommendation as a starting point: the five point IMWAC statement that already has garnered 2.5 million signatures globally for Church renewal. These five points represent part of their founding documents:

THE FIVE DEMANDS FROM IMWAC (International Movement We Are Church)

Since 1996, when the International Movement We Are Church was founded in Rome, it has demanded reforms in the Catholic Church. The five most important demands are:

1. **Transformation of the Church into a brotherly/sisterly one.**

Filling the discriminating gap between clerics and lay people.

Lay people should have a say in decisions and decision-making processes when they are concerned.

Separation of powers (the bishops and the Pope are law makers, judges and administrators at the same time (like monarchs).

Introduction of democratic procedures and structures in the Church etc.

2 **Abolition of compulsory celibacy:** Each man or woman opting for priesthood should be free to decide whether they want to marry or not. It is extremely discriminatory (of both men and women) that a priest must renounce his priesthood when he loves a woman. Additionally it causes manifold suffering more often than not.

3. **Equal rights for men and women in the Church**, therefore no restriction whatsoever for women in terms of offices (women should have access to all church offices)

4. **The sex morals of the Church should support people in their sexuality and give them orientation. They should not aid and abet people who abuse sexuality.**

5. **Proclamation of the Gospel which brings freedom and joy instead of fear.** Generally speaking, the Church should support all the people, even those who find it difficult to live up to Christian principles (such as homosexuals , divorced and remarried people...)

Chris (Future Church) shared this work because she felt it would help us be focused, given our short time frame and the need for wide participation in this effort.

Paul Collins (Australia) felt this call to renewal would create a needed common voice. As we craft our statement, it was suggested that we be mindful of the contributions from the Helmut Schüller U.S. tour (40,000 signed this petition).

Bob Heineman: (CTA) suggested that we consider using the language of "Catholic citizens of the Church" as it dovetails well with the need for democracy.

Tony Flannery (Ireland) added that he was happy with the 5 points as the core of our message but needed to have us consider that the advisers to the Pope are "8 traditionally-minded old men." He felt it might be enough to concentrate on the principle of all having the freedom to discuss issues in the Church. From a political point of view, we need to craft a statement that is both tight in interpretation and clear that we need all the faithful to be free to discuss Church issues. It is imperative that we confine issues to what is "do-able."

Brendan Butler (Ireland) said to have a just Church, we need to ask for amnesty for all theologians who have been treated unjustly and banned since Vatican II and demand justice on their behalf.

Peter Wilkinson (Australia): We need to discuss the issue of bishops having full authority over diocesan and plenary (national) synods since there hasn't been a plenary synod in Australia since 1937! The bishops dismissed the call for synods as "the time is not opportune." We must have regularly called synods coupled with the freedom of the faithful to discuss issues of concern.

Donna Quinn (American Coalition of American Nuns) believes we need a call for a church for our daughters. We must do away with gender discrimination and the elements that perpetuate discrimination. It is a form of violence.

Sonya Quitslund (AARC) called for full accountability of church leadership to the laity (which would occur if bishops were elected by the baptized faithful).

Helen McCarthy (Ontario, Canada) believes we need to use scripture references that reference both Peter and the community as a source of authority (see Matthew 16 & 18). Both canon law and scripture support this direction and scripture does support our views on women.

Chris Schenk (Future Church): The final statement needs to cite the development of democratic structures for the lay faithful to participate in Church decision making. We need to fully demonstrate rights for the laity in the Church (which might include regular synods, election of bishops, etc.) Synods, by the way, are already recognized through canon law but bishops disregard them. Perhaps the wording needs to include having a "deliberative voice" to widen the idea of inclusion of the laity, the people of God.

Brendan Butler (Ireland): Including the "total people of God" is essential so there is no mistaking that priests, religious, and laity are included in this phrase. Perhaps we need a preamble to state that we, the total people of God, have the rights and responsibilities for the total governance of the Church—a more global, inclusive view of the total people of God.

George Bouchey (New Jersey) said that regardless of how the statement is worded, non-ordained must have a seat at the table. Until it is obligatory, the faithful will remain in an advisory capacity only. This is historic.

Charles McMahon (PA) said the key reform is the election of bishops and if achieved, could create the impetus for other reforms to follow. Someone (unidentified) said clearly, "Election of bishops is not the key issue! That is a hierarchical solution and the whole issue of lay participation and involvement is crucial and fundamental. The wording is key!"

Vatican II mandated pastoral councils and despite the work and time invested, they remain advisory and recommendations have been ignored. The wording of the statement is crucial and must be carefully crafted for the lay voice to be included, respected and accepted.

Tony Biviano: Somehow the statement must demonstrate equality so that the hierarchical voice does not override. To use the language "deliberative voice" in the decision making of the Church must somehow include the reason we are doing this. We must demonstrate that we have a love of our Church and are concerned about its future.

Paul Collins does not believe we should rely on canon law or Vatican II language to support our position. Rather, since the hierarchy has ignored both, we should not play into this but rather use scripture as our source and motivation for our actions.

There was agreement that the developing statement is a strong one and appears to reflect the majority of our sentiments. Perhaps we couch our language in words like: "Out of our

committed love for the church and our loyalty to Jesus and scripture we have concern for passing on the faith to future generations of Catholics. We declare, as the "sensus fidelium," our love for the church is our common ground and must be foremost in the final statement and then move to specifics.

"I feel energized!" said one participant. We must model a new kind of church as our common effort. We need to state that our rights are innate because as a statement, it is more difficult to skew or misinterpret. Perhaps we say that we have innate rights emerging from our Baptism.

"Let's stick to the Gospel!" one attendee said. We need to manifest our concern for the future and handing on the faith to future generations and there is a definitive lack of concern by bishops for handing on the faith.

Chris Schenk (Future Church) said it is wise to support scripture and the Gospel message since all Vatican II and Canon Law are based on scripture.

Tony Flannery: Instead of using words like "together with clergy and laity", we might be mindful of the quote from Pope Francis, himself, where he used the terms "missionary zeal of the Church", i.e., the total People of God must have a missionary zeal of the Church. We might want to coin the phrase someplace in the letter or statement to gain attention and awareness of where the Pope's thinking is.

One attendee reminded us: "So far there have been wonderful ideas and good energy but because of time, there is concern about signing off on a final statement as an organization since our community is consensus-based. We assume this is not the last call. We have a process of working through our boards and co-workers and will need time to digest the statement and how we arrived at it to share with others."

Rene inquired if the group felt that a follow up call was needed. Consensus was that there was little need for another such call for the entire group. The Drafting Committee may choose their method of communication but email contact was sufficient for the larger group in the interim.

It was verified that the drafting committee will have international representation. Those who want to be members of the drafting committee or have someone to nominate are to send an

email to: info@CatholicChurchReform.com today, 9/4/13. We will continue communication in writing by working with the "developing" statement created on this call as a foundation to move forward.

The semi-final iteration of our "developing statement," affirmed unanimously as a first draft of our common ground, is:

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 arriving from our baptism to have a deliberative voice in the decision making of our Church.

Rene recommended that if there was anyone on the call who had not received the invitation to participate (3rd party) but was referred or made aware of the call by another, that individual needs to send a request to the email address above to secure a place in the database and be sent the statement draft for input. More communication will be circulated regarding our letter with the supporting documentation. Rene closed the call by thanking all for participating and modeling the experience of Church that we want the Church to become.

Information About the Call

- We had 61 callers today and 3 called in at the concluding hour so we assume they were confused on start time.
- Our call was recorded and access to it is as follows: Dial: 1-712-432-1590 and enter the access code when prompted: 1031413#. Then you will be asked for a reference number and then enter 1#.
- We had approximately 30 reform groups represented and participating.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janet W. Hauter

Should there be edits, additions or corrections, please forward them to me for finalization: JMWHauter@aol.com by Saturday, September 7. Thank you.

ADDENDUM TO THE MINUTES

Post Call Email Additions and Comments:

From: Christian Weisner, We Are Church Germany

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 ask for a climate of open dialogue within the church.

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? 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.

From Francois Brassard & Connie Kurtenbach, Corpus Canada

I suggest 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 politically wise 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' leaders).

From Bishop Geoff Robinson forwarded by Tony Biviano

- 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 our 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.

From Larry Carney in Clifford, Ontario

I think we were trying to get across the idea that we are ALL the Body of Christ, All just parts of a greater whole. The health of the body depends on all the parts working together. This obviously hasn't been happening generally in the Church, with such a great weight given to popes and bishops and priests...authority at the top, set for a top-down movement and outlook. I suspect that the answer isn't just "We're all equal in every way" either...but some form of cooperative interaction which brings balance.

Individuals Nominated and Seconded for the Drafting Committee:

This group represents several different reform groups from five different countries.

- Paul Collins Retired priest, Australia, author of *Papal Power*
- Bob McClory: journalist, author, frequent contributor to National Catholic Reporter, U S Catholic, America
- Rene Reid, Catholic Church Reform, worldwide
- Chris Schenk, Future Church, United States
- Mary Ellen Chown of the Catholic Network for Women's Equality, Canada

- Brendan Butler, We are Church Ireland, Coordinator NGO peace Alliance.
- Martha Heizer, We Are Church chair, Austria
- Janet Hauter, Chair, American Catholic Council, United States