Ein Jahr Franziskus

International church reform groups seek meeting with Pope Francis

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V Letter to Pope Francis

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Groups Send Letter Urging Increase in Women's Leadership, Access to Communion

Press release, February 20, 2014

As the first anniversary of Pope Francis' election approaches, leaders of 52 organisations from the United States, Europe, and Asia working towards renewal and reform in the Catholic Church have sent a letter to the Pope. They are urging him to take immediate steps to appoint more women to Church leadership positions, and to stop the practice of banning people from Communion. They have also asked the pontiff to meet with them, saying they represent "millions of Catholics around the world who are deeply committed to our Church, but hope for changes on issues of governance and care."

They ask the Pope to appoint women to positions of policy and pastoral leadership, including as heads of offices in the Vatican Curia. They said this was "for the good of God's people," and that there were many Church leadership positions where "the only sacramental qualification for service is Baptism."

They also told the Pope, "we hope to experience an end to the use of Communion as a reward for doctrinal orthodoxy." They said Communion, also known as Eucharist, should "offer love and healing to Catholics who experience alienation and rejection. Communion gives a place at the table to those who have been made to feel they were not worthy. This includes many who have felt alienated from our Church and its sacramental life for many years, including divorced and remarried Catholics, Catholics in same-sex relationships, and others."

The groups said that their proposals "are free of theological complexity and are readily able to be advanced without a break with what some might see as imperative continuity with former teachings."

Many of the organizations represented by the letter's signers work on a wide variety of reform issues (www.catholic-organizations-for-renewal.org). In addition, three national associations of priests are among the signatories.

Representatives said that Pope Francis has inspired "abundant hope" with his vision of the Church, and asked him to pray for them. They said they were praying for the Pope's health and ministry.

A copy of the letter was also sent to Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal-elect Pietro Parolin, Papal Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, and Member of the Team of Consulters to Pope Franics, Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley.

February 14, 2014

Bishop Francis,

We share with people throughout the world the great joy of your election to the Chair of Peter and the abundant hope engendered by your vision for our Church.

Of the many issues you have addressed this first year in your new ministry, two have emerged early and often in your remarks: the status of women in the Church and the pastoral care of God's people. As leaders of a movement of steadfast Catholics, committed to the best to and for our Church, we offer you reflections that we believe would bring a greater measure of compassion and courage to the world and to God's People. These proposals are free of theological complexity and are readily able to be advanced without a break with what some might see as imperative continuity with former teachings.

For the good of God's people, we feel it vital that there be increased leadership of women in roles where they would be among our Church's most influential policy-makers, and in offices where the only sacramental qualification for service is Baptism. We urge you to appoint talented, committed women to positions that recognize the significant pastoral leadership they are already providing, and as heads of leading curial offices, including the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Pontifical Council for the Family, and others.

With regard to pastoral care of God's people, we hope to experience an end to the use of Communion as a reward for doctrinal orthodoxy. Communion is a sacrament of love and peace, of mercy and forgiveness offered by Jesus to all on the night before he died. It does not imply conformity with Church teachings in all instances and it does not endorse all aspects of moral choice made by the recipient. It does, however, offer love and healing to Catholics who experience alienation and rejection. Communion gives a place at the table to those who have been made to feel they were not worthy. This includes many who have felt alienated from our Church and its sacramental life for many years, including divorced and remarried Catholics, Catholics in same-sex relationships, and others.

Finally, we would welcome the opportunity to bring our experience as representatives of the millions of Catholics around the world who are deeply committed to our Church, but hope for changes on issues of governance and care. We invite you to personal dialogue with us, and with leaders of similar organizations in other parts of the world.

We pray, Pope Francis, for your ministry and your health, and ask you to remember us in your prayers, as well. We look forward to your gracious response, which can be made to Linda Pinto, Coordinator of Catholic Organizations for Renewal, at pinto.linda@gmail.com or 00-1-570-296-5326.

Yours in Christ

INTERNATIONAL
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Fortunate Families Deb Word
FutureChurch Deb Rose-Milavec
Greater Cincinnati Women-Church Ruth Steinert Foote
Louisville Women Church Polly Johnson
National Coalition of American Nuns Jeannine Gramick, SL
New Ways Ministry Francis DeBernardo
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Roman Catholic Womenpriests RCWP-USA Barbara Zeman
San Francisco Bay Area Women Church Karen A. Schwarz, Ph.D.
Sisters of Providence Peace with Justice Committee Barbara Battista, SP
Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) Ron DuBois
WATER (Women and Theology, Ethics and Ritual) Mary Hunt
Women Church of Central New Jersey Antonia Malone
Women’s Ordination Conference Erin Saiz Hanna
8th Day Center for Justice Women in Church and Society Kathleen Desautels, SP
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