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Nun criticises Irish bishops' threat to withdraw priests as civil marriage registars

American woman has been censured by Vatican for her ministry with LGBT people

An American nun who has been censured by the Vatican for her ministry with LGBT people has criticised the Irish bishops' threat to withdraw priests from their role as civil marriage registrars as "counterproductive to the welfare of heterosexual Catholics".

Speaking to the Irish Independent in Limerick where she was attending a major international conference for catholic reform leaders, Sr Jeannine Gramick said the bishops' threat made them "sound like little children – 'if you do this I am going to pick up my marbles and go home'."

"I think they would be punishing heterosexual couples in the sense of making it more difficult for them as they would have to have two ceremonies and it wouldn't hurt the gay population," she said.

Asked about the forthcoming referendum on gay marriage, the nun said: "You can be a catholic and vote for civil marriage for lesbian and gay people because it is a civil matter – it has nothing to do with your religion."

The reform conference, which was organised by the censured Irish priest, Fr Tony Flannery, called for full participation in next October's Synod on the Family of Catholics who are LGBT, divorced and re-married, members of inter-faith families and other marginalised people in the Church. It also called for the Church to pay particular attention to women who are living in situations of poverty, oppression and violence.

Another central issue discussed by the conference delegates who came from Ireland, the UK, India, the US, Austria, Switzerland and elsewhere, was governance and accountability in the Church.

Fr Brendan Hoban of the Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland said there was "grave dissatisfaction" among his 1,000 members over the procedures of electing new bishops currently being operated by the papal nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown.

"We don't believe real consultation is taking place in dioceses, and the net of possible candidates is not being spread widely enough," he said. "We think that there are genuine candidates in a lot of dioceses who would be much more effective than some of the men that are being appointed," Fr Hoban criticised.

The Co Mayo parish priest added that the policy of parachuting bishops into dioceses from other parts of the country, which has been used in the American church, was "very unsuited" to the Irish context.

However, the delegates were upbeat about the impact of Pope Francis.

"With the resignation of Pope Benedict we are at the end of an era, and this is our best chance to renew the church for a long time", Fr Flannery said.

The Association of Catholic Priests has called on the Irish bishops to get behind Pope Francis and this new era of reform.

http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/nun-criticises-irish-bishops-threat-to-withdraw-priests-as-civil-marri

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