

American Catholic Council

ARCC has for years advocated a U.S. national Catholic council, at times even using the term "Constitutional Convention"—which the founder of VOTF, Nobel Prize laureate Dr. James Muller, also used publicly in 2002. Around three years ago several U.S. bishops spoke publicly about a U.S. national council. Recently the idea of a national synod surfaced as a possible focus of VOTF.

Obviously we can no longer look for Catholic reform leadership from above. I think it is time we took the project of an **American Catholic Council** off the back burner and bring it up front!

What would be the result of such a Council? We would aim to raise the consciousness of millions of American (and other) Catholics about what Vatican II Catholicism *should* look like in the 21st century. It would mainly be an educational effort, which in turn would put practical pressure on the leaders of the Catholic Church. We would need to change the minds of thinking Catholics, who would also stay in the Catholic Church and struggle to bring about reforms—leaving would leave the billion-plus Catholics in the world worse off than before.

To start the reflections here are some of my thoughts:

1. I suggest that we speak not of a "synod," but of a "Council," the **American Catholic Council**. The vast majority of ordinary Catholics are not very familiar with the term synod, but are much more so with council. Moreover, we have the precedent of the Baltimore Councils of the 19th century.
2. I suggest that we not speak of a "lay" council, or use any other limiting term. Presumably the great majority of the participants will be laity, women and men, but I would also like to see it open to *all* Catholics, whether lay, religious, or clerical. We should recall that often priests are oppressed by the Vatican and their bishops.
3. I suggest that the American bishops also be invited. I assume that none of them would initially participate, but I believe that the virtue of openness demands that they at least be invited. Who knows, perhaps the likes of a Bishop Gumbleton would come....
4. I suggest that the documents of Vatican II plus the resolutions of the 1976 *Call to Action—Liberty and Justice for All* in Detroit be used as the resource documents for the **American Catholic Council**. The Detroit Conference included such recommendations as:
 - a. That church authorities on all levels, including official agencies and church-related institutions, hold themselves accountable to the people of God for their financial policies and practices, including investments and the ownership and alienation of property....
 - b. The local church must be involved in the selection of bishops and pastors....

- c. Shared responsibility in policy making provides that leaders in the church should utilize procedures of consultation, dialogue and participation in the development of policy.... Consequently, we strongly encourage the further development of both structures and practices of consultation and shared responsibility at every level of the church....
5. I suggest that we take a page from the 1976 Conference and arrange for **Public National Hearings** in a half dozen major representative cities, as well as encouraging every kind of gathering of recommendations from organizations, parishes....
6. I suggest that there be at least a 3 to 5 year recommendation gathering process leading up to the **American Catholic Council**. The prior process will be at least as important as the Council itself.
7. I suggest that all the Catholic reform organizations focus their national meetings on the **American Catholic Council** as a contribution to the Preparatory Process.
8. I suggest that a Steering Committee will have to be established to foster, facilitate, and organize the Process and the **American Catholic Council** itself, and its follow-up.
9. I urge everyone reading this to promote the idea every way possible privately, publicly, and in every organization you have a connection with. (**Duplicate this Invitation!**)

These are just some thoughts. I am sure that others will have much wiser ones, but these can serve as pump-primers. May I hear from you?

Leonard Swidler
ARCC President
dialogue@temple.edu

The Genie is Out of the Bottle . . .

"*Habemus papam!*" "We have a pope!" the smoke signaled, the bells tolled, and the crowd exulted on April 19, 2005. Precisely WHO is the WE who have this pope? We have a pope – a "papa-father," or, more appropriately the affectionately informal, "papa-daddy," and his name, the world learned, would be Benedict. Choosing his name for a newly minted pope is significant. Like the notion of apostolic succession, a pope's name ties him to his predecessors and is generally seen as a symbolic expression of how he views himself and his role in the Church. Possibly, he chose the name Benedict, Andrew Greeley speculated at the time, "because he wanted to be known as a healer," in the spirit of Benedict XV, a promoter of peace during WW I. Sadly, Father Greeley's hope appears to have been overly optimistic, unless peace is defined as enforced uniformity, univocality, suppression of all dissent.

However, considering developments since Ratzinger's election, a case can be made that deliberately or unconsciously he was inspired less by Benedict XV (1854 – 1922) than by Benedict XIV (1675-1758), a man renowned for his erudition and scholarship but also the author of the 1751 encyclical *A Quo Primum - On Jews and Christians Living in the Same Place*, in which he rails against the "principle of freedom of conscience," "the influence of Jewish faithlessness," and chastises Polish bishops for not enforcing existing legislation intended to keep Jews and Christians apart. He points out that for bishops to be aware of Rome's position, "It is enough to peruse decretals with the heading de Judaeis, et Sarcenis [concerning Jews and Muslims]." One suspects that the ghost of Benedict XIV would applaud his 20th century namesake's efforts while he would have been horrified at John Paul II's attitude toward the Jews and his prayer of apology at Jerusalem's Western Wall in July 2000 for the Church's past transgressions: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations. We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking Your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant."

Clearly, the documents issued by the Vatican during his papacy, as well as the documents produced under his leadership as Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (a.k.a. Holy Office or, informally, Inquisition), show that Benedict XVI considers himself a divine-right absolute ruler of the pre-democratic era or a contemporary benevolent dictator. He distinguishes those he considers loyal and virtuous subjects from those he considers misguided and in need of correction. Throughout his public career, Joseph Ratzinger has favored rigid doctrinal conformity and the clerical, hierarchical structure of the traditional Church. Even during the Vatican Council, as a young theologian, he appears to have been less a supporter of progressive changes in the Church in line with Pope John's "aggiornamento" – opening the Fortress Church's doors and windows to the winds of the modern age – than a supporter of conservative changes that would return the Church to its scriptural and patristic roots.

As head of the CDF, he signed decrees insisting not only on supportive roles for women in the Church but even

in society as wives and mothers in traditional patriarchal families. He condemned communion for the divorced and remarried, reproductive technology, stem cell research, artificial birth control, homosexuality, and condoms for HIV victims. He forced German bishops to stop the tradition of pregnancy counseling at Catholic social agencies because the certificates issued could be used to obtain abortions, though, in practice, the counseling saved lives of mothers and babies.

He opposed increased involvement of the laity in church ministries, blurring of the boundaries between clergy and laity, and married priests. He castigated progressive theologians and excoriated liberation theology, Enlightenment thought, and modernity in general.

As for ecumenism, two decades ago he was quoted in a newspaper interview stating that Jews had to convert to Christianity if they wished to be fully true to their heritage. In *Dominus Iesus* (2000), he presented Catholicism as the unique, divinely established, exclusive and unblemished path toward salvation, far superior to other defective roads. More recently, he opposed the inclusion of Turkey in the European Union because of Turkey's "alien" Muslim tradition, and referred to Buddhism as "narcissistic."

Both as cardinal and now as pope, Ratzinger has consistently identified with those opposed to a progressive interpretation and liberal reforms of the Second Vatican Council, especially the changes in liturgy and open-ness to genuine ecumenical dialogue grounded in mutual respect of all participants as equal partners and the willingness to listen to and learn from the other. The 1988 excommunication of the ultra-conservative critic of Vatican II, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and two of the bishops whom Lefebvre had illegally consecrated cannot be used to show Ratzinger's evenhandedness because Lefebvre was punished not on the basis of his theological position but because he defied Vatican authority.

It seems highly significant that Benedict's most recent document, "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects Of the Doctrine on the Church" was dated June 29, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul and a date of special meaning for Benedict as the 56th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on June 29, 1951 in the Cathedral at Freising near Munich by Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber who himself had been appointed by Pope Benedict XV in 1921. As archbishop and cardinal during

\$\$\$\$ ARE DUES DUE? \$\$\$\$\$

Dear ARCC Member,

ARCC has from its inception 27 years ago had a policy of asking for annual dues, suggesting \$25, or more. The international Board of ARCC has decided to inaugurate an experiment, namely, scrapping the practice of dues and shifting to donations. Obviously some money is needed to run an international organization – even by penny-pinching-raised-during-the-Great-Depression types. The Board is betting that by depending completely on your sense of belonging and generosity ARCC will due (I mean, do) just fine.

We are for the sake of efficiency going to renew annual memberships for all every summer, starting this summer. We will at the same time ask you for your annual donation (dare we suggest an inflation-scrunched \$25?).

*Leonard Swidler
ARCC President*

the Hitler era, Faulhaber was one of the Catholic "princes of the church" who not only pretended to support the Nazi regime in order to protect Catholics in Germany but also, one suspects, as John Allen points out in *Cardinal Ratzinger*, because as Catholics they shared fascist anti-Judaism along with fascist opposition to "liberal individualism" and Communism (both associated with the "destructive influence of the Jews"). At an impressionable age, Joseph Ratzinger, the son of a Bavarian police officer, lived in an atmosphere – personal, religious, and political – of right-wing authoritarian collectivism that opposed democracy and individualism, and that atmosphere, I believe, still colors the lenses through which he views the world and his responsibilities as leader of world Catholicism.

No wonder Benedict and his staff appear determined to turn back the clock and undo what they consider the damage done by a misinterpretation of the documents of Vatican II. In fact, to make sure that the above-mentioned document would not itself be misinterpreted, it was followed by a commentary:

"The response, based on the teaching of John XXIII and Paul VI, is very clear: the Second Vatican Council did not intend to change - and therefore has not changed - the previously held doctrine on the Church. . . . In the post-conciliar period, however, and notwithstanding these clear affirmations, the doctrine of Vatican II has been, and continues to be, the object of erroneous interpretations at variance with traditional Catholic doctrine on the nature of the Church: either seeing in it a 'Copernican revolution' or else emphasising [sic] some aspects almost to the exclusion of others." (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_commento-responsa_en.html)

Hence it is in no way surprising that Pope Benedict's most enthusiastic supporters (and those to whom he responds most warmly) are precisely those Catholics who identify either openly or covertly with the most conservative, and even reactionary bands of the Catholic spectrum – groups such as Opus Dei, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, and Catholics United for the Faith. The connection appears to go far beyond support for the pope on the part of individual Catholics or organizations. It appears to involve an unofficial network of information exchange that affects decisions made at the highest levels of the Vatican. Consider the following:

Una Voce (Latin for "In One Voice") is a self-defined "international organization devoted to promoting the traditional Mass." The eleven working links to "Ecclesiastical Documents" (<http://www.unavoce.org/documents.htm>) in the Una Voce site include Pius X's notorious "Oath Against Modernism," a document diametrically opposed to Pope John XXIII's call to *aggiornamento*. Permission to use the traditional missal was only officially given on July 10, 2007. However, four months earlier, on March 11, 2007, the following press release was published in the site: "Una Voce America is pleased to announce a collaborative program with the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP) designed to provide training for any priest interested in learning how to celebrate the traditional Latin Mass."

According to the FSSP website (www.fssp.org/), "The Fraternity was founded on July 18, 1988 at the Abbey of

Hauterive (Switzerland) by a dozen priests and a score of seminarians. Shortly after the Fraternity's foundation and following upon a request by Cardinal Ratzinger, Bishop Joseph Stimpfle of Augsburg, Germany granted the Fraternity a home in Wigratzbad, a Marian shrine in Bavaria that now lodges the Fraternity's European seminary. . . . There are currently almost 200 priests and 110 seminarians in the Fraternity." The founders of FSSP had previously been associated with Marcel Lefebvre's Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) and left to form their non-schismatic organization after Lefebvre's open defiance of Rome.

According to Jason King, director of Una Voce America, "UVA's board of directors began actively discussing the concept of priest training in early 2006" and "Preparations accelerated last fall amid speculation that Pope Benedict XVI was planning to grant greater freedom for celebration of the Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal." The first training session was scheduled for this June at Our Lady of Guadalupe seminary in Denton, near Lincoln, NE, the diocese well known for Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz's 1996 excommunication of members of CTA, Planned Parenthood, Catholics for Free Choice, the Masons, and – on the opposite end of the spectrum – Lefebvre's SSPX – a group that seems only a fraction of a millimeter to the right of the FSSP – and one mentioned approvingly in the Una Voce website. The Denton seminary is the U.S. center of FSSP activities.

While I personally believe that a diversity of liturgies should be encouraged, and love the Latin Mass (minus the offensive passages in the Holy Week liturgy) I am deeply troubled by Benedict's pattern of inevitably catering to the right-of-center Catholics while scolding, rebuking, and persecuting progressives, and I am even more troubled by the implications of the fact that apparently this change in policy was known in advance.

A few days after Ratzinger's election, on April 27, 2005, the following press release was published in the Una Voce website: "Throughout the world, you can hear the roar of approval from millions of Catholics overjoyed and grateful to hear that the new Pope is committed to Tradition. Tradition is the body of beliefs, writings, devotions, rituals, gestures – all things Roman Catholic – that has been passed down from generation to generation from the time of the Apostles until now. Amongst those cheering most loudly for Holy Father Benedictus XVI is Una Voce America."

At the beginning of this article I asked, "Precisely WHO is the WE who have this pope?" It seems my question has been answered – and I am not part of the we.

While for centuries one of the greatest gifts of Catholicism has been its ability to hold diverse perspectives in creative tension, Benedict's rigid identification with the traditionalist agenda coupled with his autocratic style of governance and political power bodes ill for a future church that, like all organisms, is in process and cannot survive unless it grows and evolves in a living exchange with secular modernity, learner as much as teacher, drawing nourishment from what Karl Rahner called the "sacramentality of the world," and, with John



XXIII, capable of discerning "the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and look far ahead."

Against the backdrop of eternity the forty years that have passed since the Council are merely a few tiny grains of sand in the hourglass. It is still "only dawn," and I draw strength from the comment of the dean of a pastoral ministry program after a newly appointed bishop had destroyed the work of decades. "The Genie is out of the bottle," she smiled, "and no matter how hard they'll try, they won't be able to stuff Her back in."

Ingrid Shafer

ELECTING OUR BISHOPS: How the Catholic Church Should Choose Its Leaders by Joseph F. O'Callaghan (Sheed & Ward, 2007)

It's not often that I can review a scholarly book as a professional historian as well as a commentator on contemporary Catholic topics, but this is one of those few occasions. Joseph O'Callaghan is an excellent medieval historian specialized in the history of Spain, the author of several books and articles on the medieval and early modern period, and a past President of the Catholic Historical Association. He is also an active member of his parish, serving for many years as a lector, Eucharistic Minister, and member of the parish Council, RCIA team and Liturgy Committee. He is thus in a unique position to research and analyze this most vexing but crucial question: how has the Church chosen its bishops in the past and how can or should it do so now. Was the present situation, in which the Pope alone picks bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and, so, indirectly even his own successor, and the laity does nothing but pay, pray, and obey, the way it has always been, the way God intended?

Dr. O'Callaghan shows quite clearly in this extremely useful book, that it is **not** how God wanted it but a product of history, the result of the Papacy's constant attempts to exert yet more control over its members. In a striking passage toward the beginning of the book he writes: "The Church exists in historical time and place, evolving over the centuries and borrowing ideas of governance and administration from secular society. Biblical scholars have demonstrated that Jesus intended to reform Israel and expected his disciples to continue that work after his death. The fount and origin of the Christian faith, Jesus did not found a new church nor did he provide his disciples with an organizational chart for such an institution." (7)

As the number of Christians grew, especially in the urban areas of Asia Minor and the larger cities of the West, including Rome itself, the broad lines of people corresponding to deacon, elder, priest (presbyteros) and bishop or overseer (episcopos) began to appear, although for at least the first century, the latter two were often used interchangeably to signify leaders, who ruled singly or as a group. By the second century, we read in the *Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, "You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well-trying." (14) Indeed, for centuries, the church believed and followed the principle embodied in the famous quote from Pope Leo the Great (440-61): "the one who is to

preside over all should be elected by all." (27) Thus, the choosing of bishops required "the approval of the clergy, the testimony of those held in honor, the consent of the order and the people." (27) Occasionally, some candidates, like St. Martin, were reluctant to take on the position of bishop, but, with the toleration and then the establishment of Christianity as the state religion in the Roman Empire, for a noble or an aspiring notable, being a bishop became a means of acquiring power and wealth. Since it did bring power and wealth, including wealth donated by the emperors, the election of bishops also began to interest kings and Emperors, who meddled more and more in the ecclesiastical "domain."

The above is a very broad oversimplification of a long process explained in marvelous detail by Dr. O'Callaghan in this study. Taking the reader through the early, middle, and high medieval periods, including the conciliar movements, O'Callaghan shows the evolution of a situation, especially in the West, in which eventually, the only person who could negotiate with kings and even the Emperor on an equal footing was the Pope, thus giving the Pope more and more prestige and power over the entire church. Indeed, as the medieval period moved into the early modern and modern, and national monarchies became nation states, the papacy began to look like the lesser of the evils, and a somewhat less intrusive (i.e., farther away) meddler than the state.

By the nineteenth century, with the Ultramontanist movement, especially in France, national councils of bishops looked across the mountains, to Rome, to protect it from the encroaching state. But Rome, and especially Pope Pius IX, was not immune to the lure of the absolute state, and when the Papacy lost its territories in Italy in 1870, it concentrated on making the Bishop of Rome spiritually and internally absolute, even infallible in matters of faith and morals. Finally, its claims were embodied in a unified, Church-wide Code of Canon Law for the first time in 2000 years. And so, in 1917, Canon 329 blithely proclaimed: "Sec. 1. Bishops are successors of the Apostles and by divine institution are placed over specific churches that they govern with ordinary power under the authority of the Roman Pontiff. Sec. 2. The Roman Pontiff freely appoints them." When and where necessary, the Vatican formalized these rights in bilateral concordats, for example, with Italy, Germany and Spain, but by and large, it simply was, or became, a *fait accompli*, and the Vatican assured us and continues to assure us that is how Christ intended it.

Dr. O'Callaghan spends a good part of the last 40+ pages of his most useful book weighing the qualities needed by a bishop, explaining how bishops are actually appointed today and carefully weighing some recent suggestions – by the Canon Law Society of America, individual experts like Huels, Gaillardetz, and Lafont – and variations on these suggested by the Bridgeport chapter of VOTF. The last two chapters, "Is He Worthy?" and "Remembering a Dis-Membered Church" are personal and touching as well as eloquent essays on what the office of bishops should be and what the Church should - can - be.

This is by far the most complete and thoughtful examination of the election of bishops over the 2000 years of the Church's existence. It is replete with footnotes to

the original sources and more recent works and has a short but well-chosen bibliography for a complete orientation to the question. Novices to the topic will find this book clear and well-organized and more advanced researchers will find a critical apparatus that does not disappoint. All in all, this is a valuable addition to the literature and a useful resource for the reform movement. Thank you Dr. O'Callaghan.

Christine M. Roussel

ARCC Award for Sr. Joan Chittister

The recipient of ARCC's 2007 Hans Küng Award for the Rights of Catholics in the Church is Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, one of the most powerful visionary voices of contemporary Christian and ecumenical religious life. Sr. Joan is the founder and serves as executive director of Benetvision: Research and Resource Center for Contemporary Spirituality, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, PA. She is the past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (consisting of superiors of the over 75,000 Catholic religious women in the U.S.).

She was prioress of her Erie community for 12 years and president of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses (1974-90). She is co-chair of the Women's Global Peace Initiative and the Tikkun Community, and serves as a member of the Niwano Peace Foundation, Tokyo, Japan, and the International Committee for the Peace Council, a partner organization of the United Nations. She is scheduled to participate as the Christian respondent to the Dalai Lama's presentation alongside representatives of Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam in the first Emory University Summit on Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding this October.

A social psychologist and communications theorist with a doctorate from Penn State University, Sr. Joan was an invited fellow and research associate at St. Edmund's College, Cambridge University in 1996 and held the Brueggeman Chair of Ecumenical Theology at Xavier University in 2002. An acclaimed international lecturer and award-winning author of more than thirty books and a continuous stream of columns and articles, she has been an advocate for the rights of women, children, the poor and generally disenfranchised for many decades. In 2005, *Called to Question, a Spiritual Memoir* and *In the Heart of the Temple* received first-place awards from the Catholic Press Association.

I have admired Sister Joan for years though we met in person only once, in Cape Town, at the 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions. Recently, doing Internet research in preparation for the ARCC event this fall, I was again deeply touched by her love of the church and her ability to capture, illuminate, and communicate the very essence of Christianity in ordinary, accessible language – written as well as spoken. In the original sense of the term, Sr. Joan is a prophet – one who speaks for God to us – her contemporaries. Three years ago, in an interview on Penn State Public Broadcasting on 12/08/2004 (<http://streams.wpsx.psu.edu/Benedictine12082.html>) Sr. Joan spoke of the fifties, and how "we had all the answers; we had exaggerated answers to the point of a kind of a religious straitjacket. And then, in Vatican II, we heard the liberating cry to get our mind and our eyes back on the purpose for our religious existence, an awareness of God and identity with Jesus. . . . Vatican II liberated us from the arrogant assumption that we are the only people that God cares about, that we are the only people through whose life God works." The Beatitudes, she said, "unlike the rules we have been talking about, call us to attitudes of mind; they call us to mercy, to care for the hungry, to care for the poor, to be peacemakers in life, to hunger and thirst for justice, not just to be convenience and comfort for ourselves, the Beatitudes call us to care about this whole globe and in this age of globalism we have never needed anything more."

No one, I thought, could possibly not see the light of Christ in and through Sr. Joan's words. Surely, even those who disagreed would have to recognize her love for the church. Then I started reading the attacks – verbal feces, vicious, cruel, personal attacks, virtual fire bombs carefully constructed to hurt the enemy. Anita Moore, an Idaho attorney and Third Order

Dominican postulant, for example, calls Chittister a "Fake Benedictine" and introduces her latest blog entry, a reaction to Sr. Joan's July 10 NCR column, with "Now it's serious: the Pope has offended Sr. Joan Chittister. NOW what do we do? Maybe there's still time for the Holy Father to take back the *Motu Proprio* before the Patroness of Polyester Pantsuits holds her breath until she turns purple and passes out. Her outpourings on Rome's campaign to enforce the actual teachings of Vatican II are a classic backwards tribute to the Rule of St. Benedict: a perfect example of what happens to you when you vow to

**The Association for the
Rights of Catholics in the
Church**
presents the
**2007 Hans Küng Award for the
Rights of Catholics in the Church**
to
Sr. Joan Chittister

Thursday November 8, 2007
7:00 p.m.
Foundry United Methodist Church
1500 16th Street, NW,
Washington , DC 20036

7:30 Presentation of Award
8:00 Sr. Joan's Lecture:
**"Roots and Wings: the Ongoing
Renewal of the Church."**
**9:00 Open Forum – questions and
responses from audience**

live by it, and then don't." (<http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2007/07/surprise-surprise.html>)

Another ultra-conservative, Fr. Alphonse de Valk, CSB, editor of the Canadian magazine *Catholic Insight* and co-founder of Canada's Catholic Civil Rights League, quotes disapprovingly from Sr. Joan's "rousing address on what is wrong with the evil Church which refuses to ordain women" at the Women's Ordination Worldwide Conference of June 30, 2000 in Dublin: "'To preach a theology of equality and at the same time maintain a theology of inequality, a spirituality of domination that bars half of the human race on the basis of gender from full participation...is to live a lie.' According to her, the Benedictines have been around for 1,500 years: 'We survived the Dark Ages, feudalism, two world wars. We're not going to let a little letter from Rome get us down.'" Valk concludes, "Sadly, her false rhetoric seduces others to the brink of the abyss, including her entire priory of 128 persons." (http://catholicinsight.com/online/feminism/article_246.shtml)

Ironically, it is for the very reasons that Valk and others find so appalling that ARCC will honor Sr. Joan Chittister this November. No one has done more than she to keep alive the true spirit of Vatican II and further the rights of Catholics, ALL Catholics, in the church. After the award ceremony, Sr. Joan will speak on the topic "Roots and Wings: the Ongoing Renewal of the Church." She will focus on key points of renewal launched at Vatican II, how they are faring today, and what next steps we need to take today to move them forward.

Event tickets are \$10.00 and can be purchased online at <http://www.arcc-catholic-rights.net/> or by sending a check to ARCC Secretary Bob Schutzius at 3150 Newgate Drive, Florissant, MO 63033.

Ingrid Shafer

Reviving the Women's Diaconate: a Matter of Justice and Necessity

Dr. John Wijngaards, the noted Dutch theologian, writer and founder of Women's Ordination Worldwide, has launched an initiative to restore the ancient and honored office of the women's diaconate. He has created a well-argued, eloquent, and compelling international petition on the WOW website, which will eventually be sent to Pope Benedict XVI but now it awaits our signatures, individually and as groups. One can also add comments which will be included with the petition when delivered to the Vatican. ARCC has signed this petition as a group but it also encourages its members and all their friends and acquaintances – cyber and other – to sign as well. **Read, sign, comment: make yourself heard!**

With John's kind permission, we reproduce below parts of the letter with which he sent this petition to us, with URLs where to sign and comment, and the full text of the Petition itself (Please note that the URLs are too long to fit into a column and need to be reconnected in your browser):

As you know, the diaconate of women functioned in the Catholic Church for almost a thousand years. It was as

sacramental as the diaconate of men was. The Women's Ordination Worldwide movement is sending a petition to Pope Benedict XVI asking him to re-instate this ministry for women.

We would like this Petition to grow into a "chain letter" from the People of God – with groups and individuals both signing if they so wish and/or adding comments.

You can append your signature here:
www.womenpriests.org/dreamshareact/phpPETITION

You may also add comments to the letter after having registered as a member to our Blog 'Dream!Share!Act!'. Visit:

www.womenpriests.org/dreamshareact/index.php?catid=2&blogid=1

Please, publicize this on your own newsletter, bulletin, blog or website.

Dr. John Wijngaards
www.womenpriests.org
www.catherineofsiena.org

Text of the WOW Letter to Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI
Vatican City, ROME

Dear Father in Christ,

Through this extended letter by the people of God, we request you to re-instate the sacramental diaconate for women in the Roman Catholic Church.

Historical Precedent

For the first nine hundred years, sacramentally ordained women deacons served our Catholic communities in many parts of the Church. Bishops laid hands on those women, invoking God to pour his Holy Spirit over them to sanctify them for the ministry of the diaconate. We believe that the time has come for the Church to re-introduce this ancient practice.

Support for Women in Ministries

In dioceses, parishes and chaplaincies women are already fulfilling diaconal tasks which, according to the mind of Christ, should be sanctified and supported by the grace of sacramental ordination. We refer to ministries such as instructing catechumens, taking communion to the sick, caring for the elderly and dying, providing spiritual direction and presiding at Eucharistic services where no priest is available. The women now fulfilling these ministries lack the special divine assistance and encouragement offered by the traditional rite of ordination.

The Needs of God's People

Moreover, if the Church re-institutes the sacrament of the diaconate for women, many more women can be drawn in to serve God's people who are now deprived of the full benefits of women's ministries. This need is becoming more acute by the day through the diminishing numbers of priests in pastoral care in major parts of the Church.

Dear Father, submitting our collection of stories, testimonies and pleas, we urge you to listen to God's people and initiate the changes that will return to the community of the faithful the precious gift of ordained women deacons.

Minutes of the ARCC Board Meeting

May 4 - 6, 2007

Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC
R. Schutzius, Secretary

Present: William D'Antonio, Tom Doyle, Caridad Inda, Sonya Quitslund, Robert Schutzius, Gerard Sloyan, Ingrid Shafer, Leonard Swidler

Absent: Earlene Mara, Pam Monaco, Hugh O'Regan

Friday Evening: The meeting began at 8:00pm with a prayer provided by Earlene even though an injury prevented her from attending the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Caridad reported that she submitted a program proposal to CTA in Nov. 2006 on the Multicultural Parish for their 2008 Conference, but received no reply.

The needs of Hispanic communities were discussed. Like previous first generation immigrants, Hispanics seek a Church that reflects their own cultural heritage, and are not focused on their rights in the Church. They are finding other denominational churches more responsive to their needs.

Discussion then focused on the objectives of ARCC. Methods of getting ARCC's message out to all Catholics were explored.

Saturday Morning: The meeting began at 9:00 am again with Earlene's prayer.

Bill D'Antonio made a presentation on his newly published book *American Catholics Today* which describes the latest trends among Catholics compared to previous surveys and the shifts observed in the priorities of Catholics to 1) Individual Conscience, 2) Common Good, 3) Commitment to the Poor, and 4) Commitment to the Church. Previous surveys ranked Commitment to the Church higher. Other notable characteristics in the 2006 survey were: a) Loss of Church authority even among Pre-Vatican II Catholics, b) Increase in the need for dialogue of laity with the bishop, c) Increase by laity in parish administration and selection of clergy, d) Option for change, but shallow in strength. Bill recommended the VOTF book, *Voice of the Faithful Speaking Out*. He continued that small intentional Eucharistic Communities are increasing in number. Discussion ranged over many problematic issues in the Church.

The fall 2007 ARCC Board meeting will begin on Thursday Nov. 8th at the Foundry and continue at WTU on the 9th and 10th.

Break for Lunch

Saturday Afternoon: Caridad agreed to review the ARCC publications to prioritize them for re-printing.

Planning for the H.K Award then took place. Ingrid, Caridad, and Earlene will be the Awards committee and will work on a framed document and gift to be presented to Joan Chittister.

Len will contact Joan C. to present her with ARCC materials and ask her for a meeting with the board on Friday morning. Sonya will be in contact with the Foundry.

Bob & Caridad will staff the admission process and collect the \$10.00 admission fee.

Earlene will chair the publicity committee. Ingrid will create a flyer and send some to the Foundry. The file will be sent to the board for their use.

Tom will obtain the mailing addresses of Catholic Institutions in the DC area and send it to Bob for flyers to be distribute.. Ingrid will create a file for the tickets and send it to Bob. Ingrid will send the names of those who pay by Pay Pal to Bob.

Election of Officers followed with these results:

President – Leonard Swidler
Vice President – Ingrid Shafer
Treasurer – Sonya Quitslund
Secretary – Bob Schutzius

Ingrid reported an increase in traffic on ARCC's websites from around the world. Len and Chris will review the ARCC Spot LIGHTS published over the past three years for possible publication. Discussion followed on the criterion for membership in ARCC.

Some suggested that agreement with ARCC's goals was enough, while others thought that the \$25 dues was needed. A compromise was made whereby members will be reminded in the next edition of AL that a **suggested** contribution (of \$25.00) would be due on July 1, 2007 in accordance with the new membership renewal date. Len and Ingrid will work on an appeal letter for AL.

The treasurer's report followed. Sonya reported that she prepared a 2007-2008 budget of \$9000, but anticipates income of only \$8000. The results of our new July 1 member renewal effort should be known before other steps are taken to address the shortfall.

Len and Ingrid reported on the Phoenix meeting chaired by Robert Kaiser relating to an American Lay Synod. There were 25 in attendance. *God vs. the Gavel*, a book by Marci Hamilton was recommended.

Tom agreed to write a commentary on the legality of the action by Bishop Bruskewitz in Nebraska.

Tom will consult with lawyer friends about the usefulness of filing amicus briefs for trials involving Church matters.

Len will contact Charles McMahon about serving on the board.

Hugh O'Regan gave a report by phone on the pending 1st Annual Northern California Convocation which will deal with Lay Leadership and Non-Threatening Dialogue. The five topics to be discussed will be democratically chosen. It is a diocese and parish supported event. Members of VOTF and CTA will be represented as members of parishes. Planning for this began in December '06. The bishop will be present at this June 2-4 conference and 300-400 participants are

anticipated. Hugh will report to the Board after the meeting.

Discussion then focused on the future of ARCC. Ingrid offered her statement on ARCC as a think tank as our unique characteristic and contribution to the reform movement. The image of ARCC is not that of the major reform groups like CTA or VOTF, nor do we aspire to that status, but our documents and publications do provide support for the work of others. We continue to have the ability to challenge Church authorities when they ignore rights or assume authority that they do not have. We are painted with the same episcopal brush as are other dissident organizations and their generally accepted rule, "If we don't control it, it is not Catholic," places us out of their circle for dialogue.

Our continued challenge to irrational/unjust/unchristian behavior by using theology, law, and history, is our unique way of empowering many in the Church. We are not primarily a membership organization, but cherish our members and need their support. We are an all-volunteer group that suffers from the same difficulties that volunteer groups do. Service cannot be demanded, but must be freely given as we cope with other demands of life. Commitments honestly undertaken give way to forgetfulness and higher priorities.

When talented and well intentioned Christians come together to focus on goals such as ours, charity is tested and disagreements occur, but the goals remain. It was a good discussion

Sonya volunteered to serve on the editorial review committee of ARCC documents. Nominations for the 2008 H.K. award were discussed. Tom suggested Jeffery Anderson, who has rendered outstanding services as a lawyer in defense of clergy abuse victims. Tom will contact Jeff's wife about his willingness to accept this award and will inform Len who will contact Jeffery directly if the answer is favorable.

Len will contact Chris about the revision of our by-laws. Caridad and Chris will continue to work on non-violent materials and strategies. Len will again attempt to contact the Catholic Historical Society about archiving ARCC materials. He will again contact Ada Marie Isai-Diaz about board membership.

ARCC Light is published by the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church. For membership information, contact ARCC, 3150 Newgate Drive, Florissant, MO 63033, send email to arcc@arccsites.org, or visit our website, <http://arccsites.org/>. Suggested donations are \$25.00 per year. Editors: Christine M. Roussel, PhD, rsvpcmr@juno.com Ingrid H. Shafer, PhD, Email: ihs@ionet.net

