

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

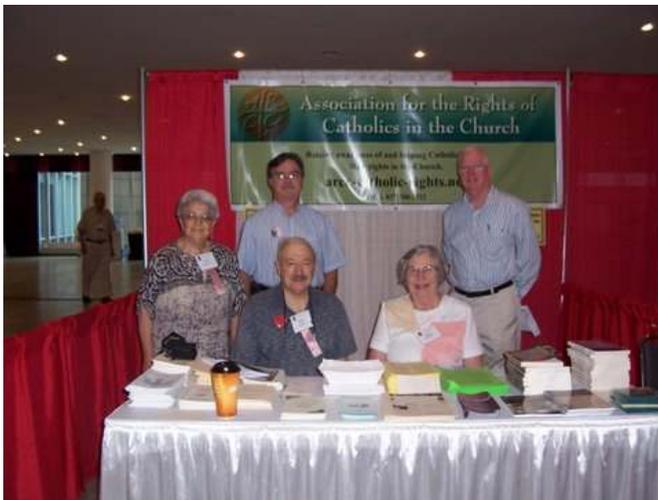
These are, indeed, exciting times for ARCC. For 31 years we have offered insights relating to the Rights of Catholics in the Church. The June meeting of the board could easily be viewed as a turning point, in that we determined that now is the time to take new and bold action. This recognition was brought about by the dramatic events related to the American Catholic Council, the on-going (if not intensifying) sexual abuse crisis, and the presence of new perspectives. I cannot be more pleased with our current direction and I hope that all of you can join us in our enthusiasm for these initiatives. The key to our efforts will be the awakening of the People of God to take their rightful place as leaders of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*.)

Lest anyone think that taking a new direction is a refutation of the past, nothing could be further from the truth. ARCC has rested on some very broad shoulders over the years. It is the brilliance and commitment of so many that has produced a vast array of incredible information. ARCC has been responsible for the

16th and 17th Centuries are responsible for the development of democracies around the world, including those in North America. If John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau had never written, we may not have the freedoms we have today. I would suggest, then that if Hans Küng and Karl Rahner had not written we may not have the recognition of the existence of rights within the Church. The distinguished members of ARCC have drawn out these ideas and made them critical foundations upon which we now build.

Rights Monitor

The first of the new initiatives upon which we have chosen to embark is to establish a means to communicate with everyone much more frequently. The board has approved the development of an electronic newsletter using the Constant Contact® platform. This will be in addition to the continued publication of *ARCC Light*, which will be released quarterly. The newsletter will be called *Rights Monitor*. This will be used as a way to develop themes and to report cases of either rights abuses or victories. We think it is extremely important that all of us be well informed regarding the application of the concept of rights. We invite all of you or anyone you know to send us information related to the rights of Catholics, including cases of abuse or victories. The main focus is to keep us all up to date. The first month of the Rights Monitor is September 2011. We will begin this with a theme for each month. The themes we have chosen for the first four months are: bullying, coercion, manipulation, and harassment in the Church. However, we welcome input related to any topic from anyone. The theme is just a way for us to focus our output and initiate conversation. Given that we certainly do not want to get overly focused on the negative in our public interaction, we also invite examples of exemplary application of our rights. Rather than curse the darkness, we invite you to help us shine a light on abuses, as well as either poor or exemplary behavior in our leadership.



ARCC Booth at ACC
Caridad Inda, Patrick Edgar, Joseph Boyle,
Richard Lebrun, Sonya Quitslund

production of numerous books, leaflets, monographs, and brochures concerning the rights and responsibilities of Catholics. You can find most of this material on our web site, arcc-catholic-rights.net. This represents so many years of research and conversation regarding issues of which every Catholic should be aware. To acknowledge and develop the idea of rights is a vital undertaking. We know that the philosophers and theorists who promoted the idea of human rights in the

American Catholic Council

As you probably already know, the American Catholic Council was held in Detroit June 10-12, 2011. Many of the board members and other ARCC members were in attendance. It was a remarkable event on many levels. The various speakers were a credit to the council and stirred us all in many ways. James Carroll reminded us that it is our responsibility to hold on to the truth and say out loud "it moves" recalling Galileo's muttered response to the hierarchy's

condemnation. Matthew Fox showed us how contaminated our Church has become and called us all to continue challenging those who would keep the Church in the Middle Ages. Anthony Padovano made the case for a Church that belongs to the laity. Sr. Joan Chittister urged all of us on to be a strong voice for a vibrant, open, and gospel-driven Church. I encourage anyone who was unable to attend to view the ACC web site to get more of the details. The breakout sessions also included many helpful and informative presentations. The most important overall theme I took from the sessions was the need for all of us to take responsibility for our Church.

While there may have been some who were disappointed that their particular issue was not given adequate attention, I witnessed a general recognition that we must reclaim our rightful place as the People of God and open the windows. The only way we can address issues such as the deeply troubling sex abuse crisis is to deliver the governance of the Church into the hands where it belongs-with the people. The ACC approved the Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities by acclamation. This is a very significant development in our efforts to promote the rights of Catholics. Much of what was included in the Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is modeled on the Charter of Rights that ARCC has promoted for so long.

Hans Küng Awards

In our continuing effort to recognize those who have made a difference in defending the rights of Catholics, we have selected the next recipients of the Hans Küng Award. At our November meeting we will confer the award on Bishop Thomas Gumbleton. This will take place on November 11, 2011 at the BWI Best Western in Maryland. It is indeed an honor to recognize the work of Bishop Gumbleton who has been a courageous voice on behalf of those marginalized by the Church for so many years. The ceremony will include remarks by Bishop Gumbleton, followed by discussion and a reception. Everyone is invited to attend. Please let us know if you intend to be there so that we can provide the appropriate space. As this is held in conjunction with our regular board meeting, I encourage everyone to take this opportunity to meet and chat with the board members.

We also decided to confer the Hans Küng Award on John Hushon and Janet Hauter, co-directors of the American Catholic Council. The ACC was such an important event in terms of the promotion of rights of Catholics that we determined that this should be recognized through this award. I can think of no more fitting application of this award than to give it to two individuals who dedicated so much of their time and energy over three years to convene this wonderful event. The award will take place in April 2012 in Chicago also in conjunction with our board meeting. Further details of this event will be released as the date approaches.

New Dues Structure

The board also voted to restructure our membership fees. This was determined as necessary and appropriate since we have not changed the membership fees for over 20 years. The change also reflects our recognition that many of you may want to have an opportunity to show more support. The new structure is as follows:

- ARCC Angel -- \$100
- Regular member -- \$50
- Senior member (over 65) -- \$25
- Student member -- \$15

As you can see, we are doing more than just increasing fees, we are diversifying how members can participate. We recognize the challenge of many of you on fixed incomes, so we have not changed the membership dues for seniors. We also want to bring in many more young people. The main message I want to deliver to all of you is that we are intent on broadening our efforts. In that regard, all of you can help immensely. Please tell others about ARCC and encourage them to become members.

Workshops

In our commitment to broaden our appeal and to honor our responsibility to educate more Catholics, ARCC continues to develop the idea of presenting workshops throughout the continent. We are currently in the development and fund-raising phase of this crucial endeavor. As a result of what we learned at the ACC, we are more committed than ever to present these workshops. Our next board meeting will be largely dedicated to formulating the details of the workshops themselves. I am firmly convinced that this may yield some of the most exciting results of any of our efforts. The fact is that knowledge is power and we need more Catholics to know what their rights are and how they can best promote those rights. I again ask for your support in any way that you can. We welcome contribution in terms of ideas and resources. There will be a special fund established to support these workshops. If you or anyone you know can contribute to this exciting effort, please contact us. This is truly a new direction for ARCC. I hope that you will see it as a definitive move to make a difference. Thank you in advance for all of your support.

Presidential Advisers

Continuing with a long standing tradition in ARCC, I have selected several of our distinguished members to serve as Presidential Advisers. These individuals will be consulted on a regular basis regarding the many challenging issues we face in the Church or within ARCC itself. I am committed to recognize the broad shoulders on which I stand as we move forward. While I certainly rely on all of you to send on your deas and suggestions, I will rely particularly on these fine individuals for their expertise and support. As Presidential Advisers, they will receive all board

**AMERICAN CATHOLIC COUNCIL
LINKS TO LECTURE TRANSCRIPTS AND REPORTS OF BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

* John Hushon Friday Evening: Welcome and Opening Comments
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Introduction-talk-by-jdh.pdf>

* Jeanette Rodriguez Keynote (Friday Evening): Reclaiming the Freedom of the People of God
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/acc-jrodriguez-05062011-FINAL.pdf>

* Anthony Padovano Keynote (Saturday Morning): Reclaiming the Spirit and Vision of the People of God
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Padovano-transcript.pdf>

* Hans Kung Video Transcript (Friday Evening): Interview with Hans Kung
(Premiered at the ACC in Detroit, June 2011)
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Transcript-of-Kung-Video-Interview-ACC-Detroit-June-2011.pdf>

* Report from European Delegation (Saturday Afternoon): IMWAC International WE ARE CHURCH
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/IMWAC-International-WE-ARE-CHURCH.pdf>

* James Carroll Keynote (Saturday Afternoon): Reclaiming the Commitment of the People of God;
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Transcript-JAMES-CARROLL2.pdf>

You can also view excerpts of Carroll's Keynote on our page VIDEO RESOURCES
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/video-resources>

* Matthew Fox (Saturday Afternoon): Not Yet Available

* Joan Chittister's Keynote (Sunday Morning): Reclaiming the Hope of the People of God
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Joan-Chittister.pdf>

* Homily at Closing Sunday Eucharist, by Janet Hauer: It's Time to JUMP!
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Homily-FINALFINAL.pdf>

Reports of the American Catholic Council Breakout Sessions — Toward a Constitutional Church in the US
(moderated by Leonard Swidler) and
Creative Non-Violent Responses to Common Abuses in the US Church (moderated by Chris Schenk and Caridad Inda)
<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/files/2011/06/Breakout-Reports-22-7-24-11.pdf>

communications and may attend any board meeting. I would appreciate your support for me in your prayers and input. The current Presidential Advisers are:

Robert Schutzius
Mary Louise Hartmann
Thomas Doyle

Patrick B. Edgar, DPA, M.Div.

RENDER UNTO ROME: THE SECRET LIFE OF MONEY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, BY JASON BERRY (NEW YORK: CROWN PUBLISHERS, 2011)

This is a sordid tale solidly researched and honestly told. Jason Berry's latest book provides overwhelming evidence that confirms ARCC's long-standing mission and goal of bringing about substantive structural change in the Church by

institutionalizing a collegial understanding of the Church in which decision-making is shared and accountability realized among Catholics of every kind and condition. By tracing in detail the relationships between clericalism, secrecy, and lack of accountability demonstrated in particular in the ways the hierarchy has mismanaged the issue of clerical sexual abuse of children and squandered the financial resources of the Catholic community, the author, perhaps unintentionally, substantiates the case that ARCC has been arguing for over thirty years.

No member of ARCC or anyone who supports ARCC's goals should miss reading and re-reading this important volume.

The coverage is not as broad as the title might suggest, because Berry's primary focus is on the American story, with the cases of the dioceses of Boston, Cleveland, and Los Angeles explored in the most detail. However, arguing that the system of

secrecy and lack of accountability has much deeper roots than the American experience, Berry goes back to the origins of the Vatican's current financial system, which came into existence following the loss of the Papal States to the nineteenth-century movement for Italian unification. When Italian troops seized Rome in 1870, depriving the papacy of most of its traditional sources of revenue, Pope Pius IX declared himself a "Prisoner of the Vatican," and refused to negotiate reparations with the new Italian state. In the subsequent years between 1870 and 1929, when Pius XI negotiated with Italian dictator Mussolini a Concordat that recognized the Vatican City as a sovereign state and paid the papacy a compensation of some \$92 million for its lost territories, the papacy survived financially by loans (in good part from the Jewish Rothschild bank), by calling on the loyalty of Catholics generally (in the form of Peter's Pence), and by shrewd investments and business management. The funds provided by the 1929 Concordat were similarly invested (with \$52.4 million going into Italian government bonds, and the other \$39.7 million invested worldwide in stocks, bonds, currency exchanges, and gold). In effect, the Vatican financial system shifted from a religious monarchy to what Berry describes as "a hybrid form of religious capitalism" (p. 68) investing in Roman infrastructure, gold, and foreign markets. In 1942, Pius XII established the Vatican Bank, known officially as the *Istituto per le Opere di Religione* (IOR - Institute for Religious Works). Until recent years there was never any kind of public accountability for Vatican finances, and to this day, the Vatican Bank remains "off the books ... a black hole" in Vatican financial statements (p. 15).

The second topic where Berry's interests take him well beyond the boundaries of the United States is his account of the remarkable career of Marcial Maciel Degallodo, the Mexican who founded and led the controversial and wealthy religious order known as the Legion of Christ until his disgrace in 2004.

Some critics have complained that there is not much that is new in Berry's most recent book. It's true that this New Orleans journalist had treated many of these issues in previous articles and books. In *Lead Us Not into Temptation* (1992), the product of seven years of research, Berry had exposed the roots and contours of the scandal of clerical sexual abuse of children and the scandalous mismanagement of this issue by American bishops. And most of the Maciel story had been told in *Vows of Silence* (2004), written with the late Gerald Renner, longtime religious editor of the Hartford Courant. Nevertheless it is extremely useful to have the accounts offered in these previous books brought up to date and the connections between clerical sexual abuse and the financial crises facing many dioceses (bankruptcies brought about by the financial

settlements arising out of abuse cases) clearly spelled out for all to see.

With a journalist's flair, Berry furnishes engaging personal perspectives on most of the important figures in the story. Particularly appealing are his capsule biographies of the heroes of the account: Peter Borré, the retired businessman who since 2004 has led the fight to keep open Boston churches that the archdiocese has been determined to close; Sr. Chris Schenk, the director of FutureChurch, probably the most effective Catholic reform organization on the American scene, which among other things provides expert practical advice to parishes threatened with closure; Jeff Anderson, the scrappy Minnesota attorney who has made a career out of winning financial compensation for the victims of clerical sexual abuse; and Fr. Tom Doyle, the Dominican priest who served as the canon lawyer at the Vatican embassy in Washington in the early 1980's where he coauthored a secret report that forewarned the U.S. bishops of a looming clerical pedophilia crisis and lost his job for pushing the issue, and who, since 1996, has been using his knowledge of canon law as an expert witness in lawsuits in clerical sexual abuse cases. Berry's sketches of his villains, Cardinal Bernard Law, Bishop Richard Lennon, Father Marcial Maciel, Cardinal Angelo Sodano (and his nephew who schemed to profit from insider information on the closure of American parishes), and a large number of other Vatican figures and American prelates are devastating, if perhaps somewhat one-sided.

However, it is Berry's focus on "the secret life of money in the Catholic Church" that offers the best evidence in support of ARCC's long-standing concern with governance issues. As Berry himself states early on in his volume, it is the functioning of the Vatican legal system that is the central theme of his book. Uncovering the bishops' strategies to conceal sexual abuse, which unravelled in lawsuits and huge financial costs, exposed what Berry characterizes as a "netherworld of pathological secrecy." (p. 4) In the Church's monarchical power structure, each bishop functions as a prince of his own realm, largely unaccountable for his decisions. In this system bishops all too often fail to distinguish between themselves as individuals and their role as trustees for the larger, ongoing organization apart from themselves. Bishops answer only to Rome for their financial management (and are rarely if ever called to account for their failures in this area), but not to their pastors or the people in the pews. Berry argues that the Vatican's failure to regulate bishops' use of money stems from a flawed system of justice, and what the church severely needs is a modern, fair, accountable system of internal justice. Berry highlights as well the

injustices against theologians inflicted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under a system wherein the accuser, the defender, the lawyer, and the judge are one and the same, as well as the way Vatican insistence on the "cumbersome procedures" etc. by canon law handcuffed bishops in their attempts to defrock sexual abusers, and made the bishops subsidize their living, medical, and legal expenses. One can hardly gainsay Berry's characterization of the Vatican monarchical system as one that "has no separation of powers, nor a bona fide court system for the criminal prosecution or property rights," (p. 356) nor his conclusion that the "Vatican cannot be reformed without an independent court system to supplant the tribunals that cater to bishops." (p. 357) His account clearly justifies his contention that existing tribunals (such as the Apostolic Signatura, which handles appeals from other tribunals and congregations, and the Congregation of the Clergy), "make a mockery of justice." Berry's recommendation for reform is precisely in line with ARCC's goals; he contends that an "international commission of Catholic constitutional scholars could craft a system to codify children's rights, the preservation of parishes, and oversight of bishops." (p. 357)

There is one small point and one larger one where Berry's work can be criticized. The minor point deals with his understanding of Italian history, where he confusedly refers to Piedmont "ruled by Victor-Emmanuel II," in alliance with "the prime minister of Sardinia, Count Camillo Cavour." (p. 43) In fact, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia had existed as one political entity since 1720 (known officially as the Kingdom of Sardinia), and Cavour served as the prime minister of this state. The more serious problem is Berry's understanding and interpretation of the concept of "apostolic succession." Strictly speaking the concept deals only with the mechanism whereby episcopal authority is transmitted. Berry himself correctly characterizes the basic idea: "Ecclesiastical tradition sees the men of the hierarchy in a descending line from Jesus's apostles." However, he then goes on to argue that by the evolution of a self-protective logic, "apostolic succession created a caste system" (p. 278) that somehow influences and justifies the way bishops understand and exercise all aspects of their authority (see passing remarks on pp. 98, 317, 336, and 354). Surely this is an extended interpretation of the doctrine of "apostolic succession," which in official teaching has not gone beyond bishops' authority over the administration of the sacraments.

As Sister Joan Chittister is quoted on the dust cover, this book is "required reading for those who ... are interested in the ongoing effort to restore the credibility of the church and its hierarchy."

Richard Lebrun

COURAGEOUS AUSTRIAN PRIESTS CALL TO SAVE THE CHURCH BY REFUSING TO OBEY CERTAIN ROMAN REGULATIONS IN CONFLICT WITH VATICAN II

In April 2006, dissatisfied with the ineffective way Rome was dealing with certain issues and problems in the global Church, a group of Austrian priests, under the leadership of Helmut Schüller, the former Vicar General of the archdiocese of Vienna, formed the "*Pfarrer - Initiative*" (Parish Priest Initiative) to give as many Catholic priests as possible, along with parishes and parish councils from a variety of Austrian dioceses, as well as parishes and priests from other countries, an opportunity to freely debate a number of urgent issues, for supporting models that had already been suggested as ways of bringing the Church up to date, and for considering possible alternative solutions based on their personal parish experience.

Their concerns included:

- ◆ the future of parishes in times of shortage of priests;
- ◆ the right of the baptized to celebrate the Eucharist and the sacraments;
- ◆ the call of all baptized persons to share responsibility for co-shaping the path of the Church;
- ◆ the crisis of the Sacrament of Penance;
- ◆ the human and pastoral problems caused by the existing marriage rules and requirements of the Church;
- ◆ the stagnation in the efforts to achieve unity and Eucharistic fellowship of Christian churches.

The *Pfarrer Initiative* can be contacted and their documents, newsletters, and archives can be read at pfarrerinitiative@gmx.at.

By October 2006, 213 members had joined the *Pfarrer Initiative*. The group asked the Bishops' Conference to give the leadership of the organization and women members of parish councils an opportunity to present their concerns to Pope Benedict personally during his visit to Austria in August 2007. They were not given that opportunity but wrote a letter to Rome and did receive a response from Cardinal Bertone in September 2007 which, along with a conversation with the Papal Nuncio, encouraged a delegation of the group to visit Rome in November 2008.

On June 29, 2007, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church."

On July 7, 2007, Pope Benedict published the *Motu Proprio "Summorum Pontificum"* with new guidelines for the use of the 1962 Missal to facilitate potential full unity with Rome for the Society of Saint Pius X and to make it easier for bishops to permit the use of the old Missal when requested by the faithful.

Six days later, the *Pfarrer Initiative* strongly criticized both documents as making Vatican II-initiated renewal of the Church more difficult and causing major problems for parishes.

Interlude: Bishop Stecher, a Genuine Vatican II Shepherd

In September 2008, *Kirche In*, a progressive Austrian Catholic magazine, published a letter the retired bishop of Innsbruck, Reinhold Stecher, had written to Prof. Medard Kehl, a renowned progressive German theologian and passionate supporter of the Second Vatican Council, thanking him for an article he had published in the Jesuit magazine *Stimmen der Zeit* (5.2007, pp. 316-329) concerning the closing and merging of parishes enforced by the hierarchy. Clearly, Stecher was deeply troubled by the Roman tendency to encourage impersonal mega parishes, along with the chasm of alienation he saw opening up between parish clergy and their flock on the one hand and the hierarchy on the other.

Stecher had discovered the alienation especially after he had retired and over a decade held retreats with thousands of priests and religious — both men and women. However, he had never been shy about speaking his mind to his fellow bishops and the Vatican, as you can read in a couple of his letters I translated 14 years ago:

<http://www.usao.edu/~facshaferi/STECHER2.HTM>
and <http://www.usao.edu/~facshaferi/stecher6.htm>

He saw as a major reason for that alienation as well as the parish realignment in the consistent refusal of Rome to appoint bishops who were trusted by the people of the diocese and would have been chosen by their brother priests and laity. Stecher notes that he personally made discreet inquiries concerning such cases and knows for a fact that Rome routinely rejects candidates who have earned their people's confidence over years and decades. Rome is more interested in governors than shepherds. Consequently, ever fewer bishops have pastoral experience in ordinary parishes, and wear what he called "the quality seal of the approval of their subordinates."

Then there were the rules imposed by the leadership that were not accepted at the ground level. Stecher wrote that he had never met one pastoral

priest who approved of *Humanae Vitae* and defended the teaching. He pointed out that his close friend, Cardinal König, had told him that Paul VI personally responded to his question that "he didn't take that section of *Humanae Vitae* that seriously." However, in a secret instruction to the Nuncio, John Paul II raised adherence to this doctrine to the litmus test for being appointed to the office of bishop. For pastors dealing with ordinary people this doctrine has never been justified and acceptable. Stecher couldn't think of any more perfect examples in Church history of a "*doctrina non acceptata*." [sic]

Another area in which the parish priests do not agree with the official line of the Church involves pastoral care for the divorced and remarried without any regard for their religious commitment and yearning. In fact, this sacramental ban is not actually practiced—but at the expense of an inner communion with Rome. In these spontaneous discussions during retreats, not initiated by Stecher, he would occasionally hear a priest defend the policy but only based on the authority of Rome.

He writes that the practice of closing and merging parishes adds further to the alienation. Parish priests are rarely consulted concerning these "solutions." They have neither platform nor voice. Priest councils are de facto and de jure irrelevant. Parish communities that openly point to the troubling consequences of this system are dismissed as heretical. The pastors—and especially those who have faithfully lived the celibate life as a service to the cause of Jesus—do not understand this "sacramental drought" of the Church. And if one says that everything else should just be left to the laity, and priests should limit their activities to administering the sacraments, then experienced pastors know that vital sacramentality in the Church demands the gradual building of human relationships and that, for example, the anointing of the sick is often the culmination of lengthy, compassionate care and empathetic conversations, and not simply a mechanical act, in which a stranger is called to make a gesture and mumble a word to a stranger. But precisely that is the case when the priest's sphere of activity makes the development of human connections virtually impossible.

Back to the *Pfarrer Initiative*

By October 2008, 321 priests and deacons as well as 55 lay supporters had joined the organization, and a German branch of the *Pfarrer Initiative* had been established.

The November 2008 Newsletter focused on the visit to Rome. However, as Schüller reported, it turned out that it had been very difficult for them to make the necessary contacts. The Pope would not meet them. Others backed out or refused. When Schönborn attempted to intercede on their behalf, he discovered that the Secretary of State had forbidden Vatican officials any contact with them. Schönborn finally appealed to the Pope who ultimately decided that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith could visit with them. Their concern with married and women priests were simply — but politely — dismissed, as once and for all decided by the Pope. As for sacraments for the divorced and remarried, they were told they and those personally affected must obey the Pope and Jesus. On the bright side they were treated respectfully and with genuine sympathy. A German station of Radio Vatican even broadcast an interview with them.

The July 2009 Newsletter dealt primarily with the group's plans for the September 9 General Assembly to introduce their main theme "People for Parishes & Parishes for People" in 10-12 specific points, dealing with the connection of "locality and Church," a critical issue that far exceeds priestly celibacy to which Pfarrer-Initiative's efforts to save the Church of the future are generally reduced. The group's understanding of Church focuses on the same concerns as Bishop Stecher's. Rather than as a matter of essential human relations Church leaders tend to consider parish communities as outdated organizations and structures that no longer fit modern times. Pastoral theologians, except for a few exceptions who are marginalized by Church leadership, also tend to neglect the local nature of the parish. The association argues that the social foundations of the "parish community as church" must be developed considerably more flexibly and concretely on the grassroots level, in the way they pass on the faith, their sacramental life, how they deal with the "alienated," their missionary work, their ecumenical dialogue with other Christian communities, their care for children, young people, families, the elderly, sick, and needy. Their task to build bridges to "foreigners" and to members of other religions and cultures, their contribution to the political life of the community and region, serving as role models in social and global solidarity and ecological responsibility. This kind of life and experience of "communio" around the Eucharist and the other sacraments requires a limit on the size of a parish and number of members. Even the everyday interaction of the ordained and non-ordained is affected. This means that everything about the future of the parishes is at stake.

In May 2010, the *Pfarrer Initiative* unanimously approved three resolutions to be sent to the Pope, the Nuncio, the Austrian bishops, and the media.

For several weeks, serious allegations had surfaced against Pope Benedict XVI regarding his approach as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in cases of sexual exploitation. The Pope's failure to deal with the allegations hurt the credibility of all efforts to handle recent incidents transparently and effectively and to prevent further incidents.

They appealed to the Pope, asking him to appoint an authority, independent of the hierarchy, with the unrestricted responsibility to clarify the questions raised by the accusations or to make his office available to the investigation. They wrote that as members of the *Pfarrer Initiative* they were appalled by the extent of cases of sexual exploitation in the Church. Unfortunately, only the pressure of media coverage led to a more assertive approach by the Church leadership. An accurate analysis of the events of the past could not succeed if the current church structures were ignored and protected. It had been scientifically proven that authoritarian structures make it easier to encourage and cover up sexual exploitation and excessive acting out of power toward one's subordinates, dependents, and the naive in society in general as well as in the Church. Dealing with cases of abuse of spiritual and religious authority in sexual exploitation, shows serious shortcomings of the Church's administrative structures: the sole and unchecked responsibility and authority of the pope without sufficient involvement in a collegial management system—the consequent failure of the bishops as middle management,—the lack of any modern legal systems, including even the self-evident separation of powers—the lack of transparency of decisions, and even if there is no decision—the lack of a culture of accountability to the people of the church by those in power and office holders—the exclusion of the people in the pews from decision-making, etc.

They appealed to the bishops to confirm their commitment to the needs and concerns of local churches and communities by assuming their collegial responsibility in the management of the global Church by convening a council on the great matters of the future path of our Church! They pointed out that the current absolutist Church structure was a major obstacle to solving critical issues concerning the urgently pending questions pertaining to the future of the Church: the reorganization of the life of Christian communities, the reform of Church teaching according to gospel standards, the ecumenical

movement of Christian churches, the dialogue with the world religions, and the global solidarity regarding the respect for the dignity and rights of every human being.

They appealed to their fellow Catholics: "Do not leave, but help the reform movements that work toward the Church fulfilling its mission. The Church is there for the people and not vice versa!"

They pointed to the large number of people who were turning their backs on the Church and quitting. For most of them the pastor or staff had no chance for a clarifying conversation prior to this decision. Their parishes are often too large and the contacts between the people too infrequent, so that they could not be brought close to understanding what it means to be part of a local parish, and why it is worthwhile to belong to it and help carry the community.

On June 19, 2011, in response to the Vatican's insistence for over 30 years on appointing only bishops loyal to Rome who institute policies that reverse the course of the Vatican II Church, a regressive trajectory that is resisted by a large majority of Catholic Austrians—priests and laity—the board of the *Pfarrer Initiative* published the following document (translated by Ingrid Shafer) on their website (<http://www.Pfarrer-initiative.at/>):

The Roman Church has refused a long overdue reform, and the inaction of the bishops not only permits but forces us to follow our conscience and take action ourselves:

We priests want to set the signs for the future:

1. IN THE FUTURE WE WILL include a petition for Church reform in every Eucharist. We take the biblical passage seriously: "Ask and you shall receive." Before God there is freedom of speech.

2. WE WILL GENERALLY NOT DENY the Eucharist to faithful of good will. This is especially true for the divorced and remarried, for members of other Christian churches, and in some cases also for those who have left the Church.

3. WHENEVER POSSIBLE WE WILL avoid celebrating the Eucharist several times on Sundays and official holidays by making use of visiting and non-resident priests. Better have a self-designed word liturgy than a guest performance.

4. IN THE FUTURE WE WILL consider a Liturgy of the Word with Communion as a "Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest" and call it that way. Thus we fulfill the Sunday obligation in a time of priest shortage.

5. WE WILL ALSO DISREGARD the prohibition against lay preaching for teachers of

religion of either gender and qualified lay persons. Preaching the Word of God is essential, especially in difficult times.

6. WE WILL INSIST that every parish have its own head: a man or woman, married or unmarried, full-time or part-time. This should not be done through merging parishes but by a new image of the meaning of priest.

7. WE WILL CONSEQUENTLY take every opportunity to express ourselves in public for the admission of women and married people to the priesthood. We consider them welcome colleagues in the ministry of pastoral care.

In addition, we are in solidarity with those colleagues who are no longer permitted to serve as priests due to a marriage, but also with those who despite such a relationship continue their active ministry. Both groups follow their conscience with their decision - as we do with our protest. We consider them "our brothers"—as we do the Pope and the bishops. What else a "brother" should be, we do not know. One is our Master - but we are all brothers. "And sisters"—we should say among Christians, however. For that we want to arise, for that we want to stand, for that we want to pray. Amen.

Trinity Sunday, 19 June 2011.

On July 13, 2011 Cardinal Schönborn replied with a strong condemnation of the "Call to Disobedience." (<http://www.themakirche.at/impulse/articles/2011/07/06/a4122/>) He began by wondering about what he considered the disastrous effects of making disobedience into a virtue and argued that Christian obedience was a school of freedom and that every priest had freely promised respect and obedience to his bishop at his ordination just as Schönborn as bishop had promised obedience to the pope. This obedience involves the readiness to do the will of God even when one disagrees. There seems in Schönborn's response no place for the possibility that God may not speak through the Roman Catholic hierarchy. But in addition, he seems to have no understanding of the VIRTUE of Disobedience and the God-given power of HUMAN rationality as well as our DUTY to follow the demands of one's conscience no matter how inconvenient or potentially dangerous it might be—as St. Thomas clearly understood. I was born in 1939, spent my early childhood in Hitler's Austria, and my teenage years trying to figure out how the Holocaust could have happened, and why good people, like my parents, obeyed the rules of an obviously evil dictator. Clearly, obedience is not necessarily a virtue.

In their August 11, 2011 Newsletter the board of the group reported that four of them had met with Cardinal Schönborn and his committee on August 10. They told the Cardinal that four priests had left the organization after the publication of the "call" while 21 priests joined as new members and two had joined as supporters. In addition, over 160 lay people have signed up as supporters.

During the discussion of the implications of "disobedience" they pointed out that the "disobedient" pastoral practices they officially announced were already quietly tolerated by the bishops and that the public debate over the "call ..." shows how murky the issue of "obedience / disobedience in the Church" actually is — and how long overdue a discussion.

The most extensively discussed issue of the seven points of the "call" was the admission of married men to the priesthood (item 7). According to Schönborn, neither it nor the other points they considered were solutions for problems of the Church; on top of that, he said, it would be decided in Rome. At their request to position himself clearly and not only to refer to "Rome," he clarified that he was also personally in favor of keeping the current celibacy requirement for priests. In an era in which socially and politically the conventional understanding of marriage is being undermined by the legalization of other forms of partnership, the abolition of compulsory celibacy would send the incorrect message. He argued that married priests would not be the cause for more people to come to worship.

Finally, the cardinal noted that he expected them to clarify whether they would now agree in good conscience to follow the guidelines of the Church and the papal magisterium, or not. In the latter case they should consider whether they could continue to stay with the Church. This was the "crux," a question of "Confessio."

He handed the *Pfarrer Initiative* board members from the Archdiocese of Vienna a list of questions, asking them to reply within a reasonable time, clarifying that he was not speaking as chairman of the Austrian Bishops' Conference but their bishop. He considered publishing the text; if he decided to do so, they would also be free to publish it on their homepage.

Let me conclude with a reference to my theological hero, Karl Rahner, whose brilliant and yet very accessible homilies I heard as a teenager in the 1950s when I often went to Mass in the *Jesuitenkirche* near the Old University in Innsbruck. I now consider Rahner a patron saint for the reform movement. He believed in the "*ecclesia semper reformanda!*" He believed in the Spirit, and called for those who felt the Spirit's call to practice the

virtue of courage and not be afraid to speak truth to power." It is not surprising that the feminist theologian Herlinde Pissarek-Hudelist had not only been Karl and Hugo Rahner's student in the 1950s, but was the first woman to earn a Th.D. at Innsbruck, became Karl Rahner's assistant in the early years of the Council, was called to a newly established chair as the first female full professor at the Innsbruck school of theology some 20 years later, and finally became the first dean of a Catholic theological school in the world.

In an essay based on a 1962 lecture entitled "Do Not Stifle the Spirit!" Karl Rahner anticipates not only the Austrian rebel priests but all of us who love the Church and are loyal to the Spirit AND the Church, precisely by having the courage to dissent:

But it is important to recognize the truth that the work of the Spirit in the church takes effect not only through these official ministers, but through those over whom they preside as well; that the Spirit's influence also extends in the inverse direction, from the ministered to the ministers. And if this is true, then the individuals upon whom God bestows the grace, and also the burden, of charisms (and it would be better if more of the church's members would commit themselves to accepting that the Spirit might be entrusting them with such gifts and such responsibilities) have also a right and a duty to avoid simply hiding behind an attitude of dumb obedience—in truth not in the least because it is a humble attitude, but because it is a comfortable one. Rather they must speak out—proclaim what they believe to be true, for it is quite possible that this may be the truth of the Spirit of God. They must be tireless in testifying to it even in the presence of the established authorities in the church, and even when it is inconvenient or displeasing to those "authorities," even when they themselves have to endure the sufferings of the charismatic for doing so, in the form of misunderstanding and perhaps even disciplinary action on the part of the authorities. The spirit of true obedience is present not so much where the official machinery of the church is running smoothly and without friction, not so much where a totalitarian regime is being enforced, but rather where the nonofficial movements of the Spirit are recognized and respected by the official church in the context of a universal striving for the will of God, while the "charismatics" for their part, while remaining faithful to their task, maintain an attitude of obedience and respect toward the official church. For it is God and God alone who builds the one church, shaping the true course of its history as God wills out of the materials of the multiplicity of spirits, tasks, and ministries in the church, and

out of the ensuing tensions and oppositions which are so necessary (Geoffrey Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Selected Texts*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984) p. 249.

No wonder that the Austrians were the ones to start the *Kirchenvolksbegehren* (the We Are Church petition drive) in 1995. Spiritual descendants of teachers, such as J. A. Jungmann, the Rahners, Professor Pissarek-Hudelist, and others, had the courage to challenge Rome to stop closing the doors and windows to the winds of *aggiornamento*—love, compassion, respect for the other, rationality, justice, dialogue, modernity, and full human equality.

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