

Forward in Faith Council Statement

September 18, 2017

Beloved in Christ,

As the Council of Forward in Faith, North America we have discussed with the six FiF NA bishops who have just returned from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, where they met in Conclave, the implications of the Message from the College of Bishops. They have been very clear that the agreement of the College is that individual statements, and, in particular, attributing to individual bishops, their comments cannot occur. Moreover, any comments that would appear to suggest some form of “victory” would be highly inappropriate. The College understands that the January meeting in Melbourne Florida will be the next opportunity for them to meet and prayerfully proceed. We acknowledge that the College of Bishops met, often in Silence, for the purpose of receiving the excellent Report of the Task Force on Holy Orders. We give thanks that one of our FiF NA bishops served on the Task Force, and that one of our bishops served on the four-man team which produced the Statement. We also acknowledge that the Statement was unanimously endorsed, but that this endorsement does not imply that Traditionalist Bishops have reached any conclusion other than the one that has been articulated for 2000 years. By now we are certain that everyone has read both the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church in North America and also the Task Force Report, and that with these in mind, have evaluated the Statement from the College of Bishops. This Conclave was designed and reported to be the very first time that serious theological conversation has occurred regarding the nature of Holy Orders as an innovation in the Episcopal Church in 1976. Since the formation of ACNA, we

have endeavored to study and discuss the Three-Fold Ministry as a Received reality and mystery, and then to study and discuss the reality of who may be ordained, based on their sex, their marital status, and their moral character among other considerations. We must add that Forward in Faith, North America is comprised of numerous Anglican jurisdictions, with the ACNA representing the largest percentage of membership. We note that, with the exception of the Episcopal Church, none of our other jurisdictions ordain women. Forward in Faith is comprised of numerous jurisdictions, all of whom have signed our Declaration which maintains all elements of the Historic Faith.

The Conclave, in Canada, was not only monumental in light of the fact that a Study had not been conducted before in terms of prayerful, theological debate among Bishops, but it also was an opportunity to understand the biblical, hermeneutical and theological positions held by individual members of the College of Bishops. This active process consumed all of our bishops' time, and, unlike other bodies in the past, did not want to create a desire for division among the College. It was clear, in the case of the ordination of women, that women cannot be bishops, (stated also in the Constitution and Canons) and that the ordination of women is a several decades old innovation without support in either Apostolic or Catholic Faith and Order or Scripture.

The first paragraph of the released document clearly references the agreed upon Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church in North America, adopted at the time of the formation of an Anglican Body that would emphasize the fact that Dioceses own their own property and that litigation would not be a course of action for ACNA. Moreover, it is clear that in a Conciliar model of ecclesiology, Constitutions and Canons may be changed by utilizing the appropriate measures provided in the Constitution and Canons for that purpose. In all matters, Scripture and Apostolic Tradition, both universal in nature, rank above local Constitutions and Canons which can be

changed. In a Magisterial form of ecclesiology, numerous pronouncements, may from time to time be made. In the Ecumenical Councils of the Church, we see clearly that the Conciliar mode often is a longer process, but engages the entire Church. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that while Scripture and Tradition are superior to a Constitution and Canons of a Province, that the ACNA came into being with an intent to protect Traditionalists who had become persecuted in the Episcopal Church.

The final paragraph is quite clear in indicating that for a variety of reasons historic lay ministries have not been encouraged to the extent that ordained ministries have, and we must seek to effect that change. We must form more monastic communities for men and women – convents, monasteries, friaries, and draw upon models such as “Little Gidding,” Third Orders and Oblates, to place before the Church ministries that have shaped countless generations.

According to our bishops, “Every fiber of our being was poured into these three days, and numerous hours before the Conclave were spent in rereading the Constitution and Canons, the Task Force Report, and also the recommended books listed in the Bibliography, including a book written by Bp. John Rodgers as a Study for the then Anglican Mission in the Americas. Forward in Faith, in fact, mailed a copy of the “Rodgers Study” to all members of the College of Bishops. We all understand how exhausting this process can be, but we do so in order that the Church may be united in her resolve to Speak, Teach, and Propagate the Truth in Love to a broken world.”

Nonetheless, we recognize that numerous questions have and will arise regarding our concerns. Although we recognize that there were no advance promises that the matter of Women’s Ordination would be resolved at this Conclave, and that all advance information clearly stated that this would be the first opportunity for the ACNA College of Bishops to discuss the Report of the Task Force, we are disappointed. We wonder if this would not have been

an excellent opportunity for those Bishops who ordain women to recognize that this action continues to cause division. We wonder if it would not have been possible for those bishops to announce a moratorium on the ordination of women, rather than continuing to contribute to the potential of an Ecumenical crisis. We wonder if those bishops would recognize that female clergy cannot function in most of the Dioceses of the ACNA and in the vast majority of Christian churches throughout the world. In that regard they have intentionally or unintentionally effected a state of impaired Communion, whereby not all Clergy are in Communion with one another. We further recognize that many Forward in Faith Bishops are put in an awkward position regarding their ability to participate in the consecration of Bishops who fully intend to contribute to disunity by virtue of their willingness to ordain women.

We wish to thank our Forward in Faith Bishops for representing us, but also for participating as fully as possible in articulating the tenets of the Catholic Faith. In that regard, they modeled what it means to be Conservative (conserving the Faith once delivered), Traditional (maintaining 2,000 years of Holy Tradition), and Orthodox (bolding proclaiming unbroken Truth – coupled with orthopraxis.) In these regards, Forward in Faith continues to be a voice for those who maintain that which has been believed in all places, at all times, by all people, with Evangelical Zeal, Catholic Faith, and Apostolic Order.

In Christ,

The Council of Forward in Faith