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August 31, 2013

The Holy Father Francis
Bishop of Rome
Vatican City

Holy Father:

I respectfully request you to restore to all the laity and clergy of a diocese a formal role in the process of *recommending* candidates for their bishop to you prior to your appointment of him.

As a first step, you could invite interested Conferences of Bishops to develop and conduct time-limited projects in their respective nations to demonstrate effective ways to achieve this objective. At the conclusion of the projects, each of the participating Conferences would evaluate their demonstrations, report their findings to you, and recommend norms you could promulgate for the Church.

In support of this request, I enclose a document, "Furthering the New Evangelization: Consulting the Laity on Candidates for Bishop." The document contains a description of our proposal and a rationale for adopting it.

As you know, Holy Father, over the first millennium and well into the second, it was a *sine qua non* that all the members of a local church participate in the selection of their bishop. But major abuses by the nobility led Church authorities to eliminate a substantive role for the laity and lower clergy and to reserve Episcopal appointments to the Pope.

Canon Law today upholds your sole right to appoint all bishops. This presents a secure context in which to include again all the laity and clergy of a diocese in the formal process of *recommending* candidates to you for your consideration. Their recommendations could only more wisely inform the deliberations of the Congregation for Bishops in preparing Episcopal recommendations for you.

Your invitation to Bishops Conferences to develop models on consulting the laity would contribute to that "inner renewal" of the Church which you called for in your address to CELAM in Brazil, asking: "In practice, do we

make the lay faithful sharers in the mission ... with a clear awareness that the Holy Spirit makes himself manifest in them?"

Your invitation to the Bishops would work to alleviate a sense of exclusion among large numbers of the laity. It would serve also to promote your desire to draw the bishop closer to his people and they to him.

Holy Father, I make this request to you on behalf of Voice of the Faithful with the hope that it will promote the good of the Church in this period of new evangelization. We assure you of our readiness to assist further, however you or the bishops may wish, and of our prayers that the Holy Spirit will guide you in consideration of this worthy proposal.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mark Mullaney
President
Enclosure