



March 22, 2010

His Holiness
Pope Benedict XVI
Vatican City

Holy Father:

On behalf of Voice of the Faithful, and in constructive response to the damage done to our Church as a result of the ongoing global sexual abuse crisis, I request that you require the formal participation of lay men and women in the Episcopal recommendation processes held at archdiocesan and diocesan levels, preliminary to your appointment of new bishops.

In support of this request, I enclose a document entitled “Consulting the Laity on Candidates for the Episcopacy.” This analysis reviews the history of selecting bishops in the Roman Catholic Church; argues the timeliness and benefits of restoring the role of lay men and women in the recommendation processes at this critical time; and, finally, offers a model for implementing this lay participation, which the Holy See may find useful.

As you so well know, Holy Father, the participation of all members of a local church, clergy and laity, in the selection of their new bishop was regarded as a *sine qua non* by the Fathers of the Church throughout the first millennium and well into the second. But major abuses by the nobility in the appointment of bishops led Church authorities gradually to restrict and eliminate any substantive role for the laity in the selection of their bishops.

Today, the Code of Canon Law and the Second Vatican Council uphold the sole right of the Pope to appoint all the Church’s bishops, and nothing prevents you from restoring to the laity a substantive role in the recommendation processes held in their archdioceses and dioceses prior to your appointment of new bishops. Indeed, the local recommendations forwarded to the Congregation for Bishops would enjoy a breadth of information that could only more wisely inform the deliberations of the Congregation as it prepares its recommendations to you.

Your restoration of a substantive role for lay men and women in recommending candidates for the Episcopacy would be a striking illustration of *ressourcement* in the Church. Through it, the Episcopal recommendation processes would be significantly enhanced and held in greater esteem both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church and viewed as a constructive response to the many

challenges facing our church today. Voice of the Faithful earnestly presents this request to you, Holy Father, praying that the Holy Spirit may guide you in your consideration of this noble cause.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Bartley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Daniel" and last name "Bartley" clearly distinguishable.

Daniel Bartley
President

cc: Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone,
Giovanni Battista Cardinal Re,
Francis Cardinal George,
Archbishop Pietro Sambi