

Action Steps: Follow Up on Petition to Ordain Married Men

In 1980, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, at the request of the bishops of the United States, granted a “Pastoral Provision” allowing the Roman Catholic ordination of Episcopal priests who wished to become Catholics. Since then, hundreds of Episcopal priests have become Catholic priests. The same pastoral provision has been extended to many ministers of other Protestant denominations. Many, if not most, of these priests are married.

Recently, Voice of the Faithful sent a petition to every “Ordinary” bishop (that is, the one who administers the diocese) requesting a New Pastoral Provision in the United States for ordaining mature Catholic married men to the priesthood. The pastoral need we cited was, of course, the need to provide the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, to Catholics in the United States. The dramatic decline in the number of priests in most dioceses across the country has led to the closing and merging of parishes, which will itself lead to an increasing unavailability of the sacraments for the faithful. The ordination of mature Catholic married men can provide a new potential pool of priests to meet the needs of the faithful.

Voice of the Faithful now calls on our members to follow up on the petition by reaching out to your bishops and asking them to seriously consider proposing this New Pastoral Provision to the Vatican.

We encourage you to request a meeting with your local bishop to discuss the issues involved with the declining number of priests and the closing of parishes in your diocese. To help you set up that meeting, we are providing several resources, adapted from information developed by the reform organization FutureChurch for a related project.

- ❑ “Tips for Meeting with Your Bishop” provides information on how to set up such a meeting
- ❑ A sample letter you may adapt for use when requesting a meeting
- ❑ Talking Points with options for discussing a married and celibate priesthood with your bishops

Please send information about the results of your request to our Executive Director, Donna Doucette, at the national VOTF office so that she may report to all of us those results: dbdoucette@votf.org.

If you succeed in meeting with your bishop, we also ask that you send Donna a report of that meeting.

Together we can keep this critical project in front of the bishops.