



Australian bishops nix vote on women issue, plenary council disrupted

The initiative was "thrown into crisis," reported The Catholic Weekly newspaper as divisions erupted July 6, midway through the final general assembly of the four-year project to revive the local Church. At the plenary council assemblies, consultative votes are exercised by lay, religious and clerical members; deliberative votes by

the Australian bishops. The 277 plenary council members include bishops, priests, religious and laypeople. The protest occurred after the outcome of the bishops' votes on "Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men." It included various motions such as ensuring that women are appropriately represented in decision-making structures of Church governance and should Pope Francis authorize women for ministry as deacons. The motion considering women for ministry as deacons received a qualified majority among consultative voters but not among deliberative voters and did not pass. Another motion that each Australian diocese foster new opportunities for women to participate in ministries did not pass failing to receive a qualified majority on either the consultative or the deliberative votes. The Catholic Weekly reported that some participants felt aggrieved by the bishops' vote and that deep divisions were being voiced and some felt the crisis was partly due to the process itself. "One's images of God have powerful implications for identity, spirituality and relationship to God," said Sister Clare Condon in an address to the plenary council on the motion "Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men", July 5. "Therefore, women must be included in the ongoing discernment of what the Spirit is asking of the Australian Church and in the development of ongoing church teaching, particularly in regard to the meaning making of their faith, spirituality and theological education," said the sister of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict.

Reservations and concerns

"We are all equal in value and dignity, as sons and daughters of God. That dignity does not reside in power or in governance roles. We are in the greatest crisis of faith and belief that Christianity has ever faced, and it is certainly not a time to be idle," Catholic Women's League Australia, Deirdre Little, told The Catholic Weekly. Plenary's Steering Committee member, Monica Doumit, said that "In listening to people's reservations... they weren't saying that they wanted to take the material about the female diaconate out, or to reject the conversation about women in leadership in governance in the church... What they were saying is that only represents a very small measure of the desires of some women and how some women serve". Bishop Shane Mackinlay, plenary council vice president, urged members to spend additional time discerning what reservations and concerns were being expressed. The Australian Catholic Bishops' media office in a statement said a four-person writing group has been established to receive recommendations from members for the drafting of revised motions and that the new motions were expected to be considered later during the July 3-9 assembly. A plenary council is the highest formal gathering of all local churches within a country and has legislative and governance authority, subject to Rome's approval. It is the fifth plenary council in Australia's history and the first since 1937, an initiative Pope Francis approved in 2018. Catholicism remains Australia's largest Christian denomination, accounting for 20% of the 25 million-strong population.

Read more at: https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/australian-bishops-nix-vote-on-women-issue-plenary-council-disrupted/16358?utm_source=UCAN&utm_campaign=From-our-partners&utm_medium=Referral