

THE MRT REPORT ON THE QUALITIES DESIRED IN THE NEXT BISHOP OF BUFFALO

MRT Path Forward Symposium (Dec. 7, 2019)

The Movement to Restore Trust hosted the Path Forward Symposium at the Canisius College Montante Cultural Center on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019, at 9 a.m. Approximately 175 people attended.

The Dec. 4, 2019 announcement that Bishop Richard Malone had resigned, and that Bishop Edward Scharfenberger of Albany was named apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Buffalo, made the Path Forward Symposium incredibly timely.

The symposium agenda included an audience discussion and ranking of the qualities desired in the next bishop. The entire symposium can be viewed through the MRT website:

<https://movementtorestoretrust.org/symposium-december-7-2019/#live>

Qualities Desired in the Next Bishop

The symposium attendees formed small groups at their seats to discuss the qualities that they each desired to see in our next bishop using a list of 104 qualities as thought starters.

After the small group discussions, we used poll technology and over 120 attendees voted online and via text message in response to questions asking them to list their own desired qualities, resulting in over 1,000 individual votes submitted.

The results were displayed in real time in word clouds such as the one at the right, which showed responses in relative size to the number of submissions.



Next Steps

The goal of the discussion and activity was to allow the faithful of the Diocese of Buffalo to exercise their canonical rights to Participate Actively in Church Life (c. 204.1) and Express Needs, Desires and Opinions (c. 212.2 & c.212.3).

Last December, the MRT empaneled six working groups involving about 150 Catholics who developed a series of reports and recommendations for reform in the Diocese of Buffalo. These reports were released to the public this past July. One of the working groups focused on “Selecting & Monitoring Bishops,” while another focused on “Accountability for Bishops.” Working Group 4’s report included an outline of the rights of all faithful under Vatican II. See an Appendix to this report which excerpts key provisions from that report.

The input of the participants will be included in an MRT report to Archbishop Christophe Pierre, papal nuncio to the United States, who is based in Washington, D.C.

TOP 70 QUALITIES

Listed below are the qualities¹ that received an aggregate of 1,000 votes as submitted by participants in the MRT Path Forward symposium. Participants ranked their personal Top 7. Our aggregate Top 7 are shown in the box below.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Transparent | 36. Competent |
| 2. Honest | 37. Charismatic |
| 3. Humble | 38. Sense of Humor |
| 4. Holy | 39. Strategic |
| 5. Collaborative | 40. Caring |
| 6. Servant Leader | 41. Decisive |
| 7. Willing to Make Tough Choices | 42. Relationship Oriented |
| 8. Deeply Spiritual | 43. Consistent |
| 9. Committed to Reform | 44. Christ-like |
| 10. Listener | 45. Media Savvy |
| 11. Compassionate | 46. Risk Taker |
| 12. Committed to Vatican II | 47. Positive |
| 13. Walks the Talk | 48. Financially Savvy |
| 14. Trustworthy | 49. Continuous-Improvement Oriented |
| 15. Action-Oriented | 50. CEO |
| 16. Social-Justice Oriented | 51. Straightforward |
| 17. Ethical | 52. Led by the Holy Spirit |
| 18. Deeply Empathetic | 53. Resilient |
| 19. Courageous | 54. Broad Minded |
| 20. Emotionally Intelligent | 55. Direct |
| 21. Forward Thinking | 56. Results-Oriented |
| 22. Inclusive | 57. Prudent |
| 23. Shepherd | 58. Hopeful |
| 24. Just | 59. Patient |
| 25. Faithful | 60. Motivating |
| 26. Open-Minded | 61. Fair |
| 27. Respectful | 62. Insightful |
| 28. Visionary | 63. Genuine |
| 29. Inspirational | 64. Persistent |
| 30. Communicative | 65. Reliable |
| 31. Wise | 66. Charitable |
| 32. Kind | 67. Participatory |
| 33. Pastoral | 68. Self-Critical |
| 34. Authentic | 69. Public Speaker |
| 35. Approachable | 70. Energetic |

¹ It should be noted that Bishop Ed Scharfenberger, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Buffalo was in attendance. Multiple votes were received for various forms of Bishop Ed Scharfenberger which would have placed it #18 in the list above. A small number of votes were also received for (Buffalo) Bills Fan.

The Second Vatican Council in 1963 had promoted and adopted provisions to institute Rights that were to be codified to apply to all laity.

Up until this time, laity had no codified rights as members of the Catholic Church. It was not until 1983 that Pope John Paul II had formulated the Rights into Canon Law.

There were 15 Rights attributed to all faithful (c. 208 – 223), Rights for Laity (c.224 – 231), Rights for Clergy (c.273 – 289) and Rights for Religious Men & Women (c. 662 – 672).²

We believe that we, as laity empowered by the Rights of Membership, must have input and take action as we share in the mission of “teaching, sanctifying and governing” of the Church.

Specifically, the recommendations that are presented and put forth are based on the specific rights of:

- ***Right to Participate Actively in Church Life (c. 204.1)*** – The laity can and must take part in Sanctifying, Teaching, Learning and Pastoral roles in the Church.
- ***Right of Equality – (c.208)*** The laity intrinsically possesses true equality in dignity and action requiring that we all take part in the building of the Body of Christ, qualified by our position as child, lay or religious ordained and by the function such as teacher, pastor, parent or missionary in the Church. Up until the change in Canon Law in 1983, the Church operated on a system of social classes that were adopted from the Roman Empire. In doing so, the Church had become self-described as a “society of unequals” [societas inaequalium]).
- ***Right to Express Needs, Desires and Opinions (c. 212.2 & c.212.3)*** – The laity are equally endowed with the right to express needs, desires, and opinions on all matters pertaining to the ongoing good of the Church.
- ***Right to Initiate, Promote and Sustain Apostolic Activities – (c.216)*** – In all actions of building the Church in accordance with Gospel values, the laity has the right and responsibility to undertake, promote and sustain apostolic activity at all levels.

In addition to the above rights explicitly set forth in Canon Law, the following rights are necessarily implied as corollary rights in order to exercise the rights above:

- ***Right to be Informed (c.204.1)*** – Underpinned by the basic right of the laity to participate, the laity, therefore, have the right to be fully informed in all matters of Church operations.
- ***Right to be Consulted on the Selection of Pastoral Leaders*** – While this right is more implied and encouraged than explicitly acknowledged, the faithful, who are in full communion with the Church, should have an active role in the selection process. This right also has a scriptural foundation in Acts 1:15-26 and Acts 6:1-6.

² http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann208-329_en.html