

To the members of the Revision Committee

Dear

Affirming Catholicism has noted with dismay the Press Release from the Revision Committee indicating the Committee's decision to review General Synod's support for the adoption of the simplest form of legislation enabling the admission of women into the episcopate in the Church of England coupled with a statutory code of practice, as expressed in July 2008.

We believe that the suggestion that certain functions should be vested in bishops by statute rather than by delegation from the diocesan bishop under a statutory code of practice runs counter to the principle that the diocese is the fundamental unit of the Church. In practice, this means that the Diocesan Bishop is and must be recognised to be Ordinary in his / her Diocese. Consequently, as we have argued consistently in our submissions to the Bishops of Guildford and Gloucester and to the Legislative Drafting Group, any designated special Bishops who exercise a ministry in a Diocese where the Ordinary is a woman must share in the ministry of the Ordinary in order that the unity of the diocese – and with it the Church of England – be preserved.

The original motion as passed by the General Synod includes a reminder “that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans”, and asks that “additional legal provision *consistent with Canon A4*” be prepared in order “to establish arrangements that would seek to maintain the highest possible degree of communion with those conscientiously unable to receive the ministry of women bishops.” Despite the questions raised about the interpretation of Canon A4, this clause constitutes a requirement that provision for those who feel themselves in conscience unable to accept the ministry of a bishop who is a woman may not call her orders into question. We believe that the removal of certain functions by statute from women who are consecrated bishops can carry no other inference than that it is legitimate to deny that they are truly ordained. We are therefore of the opinion that the vesting of certain functions in another bishop by statute in the case where the diocesan bishop is a woman would be contrary to the motion passed by Synod in July 2006, as well as discounting the recommendation made by General Synod in July 2008.

We therefore ask that the Revision Committee reconsider its decision.