

## **Tips for meeting with your Bishop about the Open Letter from the People of God**

1. See if anyone in your group already has contacts in the chancery and/or is known as a credible person in the Arch/Diocese.
  - a. Have them call and ask the Arch/Bishop/Cardinal's secretary to arrange a meeting for a fixed amount of time on his calendar (30 min-one hour).
  - b. If the secretary asks the purpose of the meeting, simply say you and your group of (3-4 people would be good) want to discuss concerns about parishes and staffing in your diocese. (I wouldn't go any farther than that, you don't have to expand)
2. If no one has a contact at the Arch/Diocese then select one person to do the logistics in setting up appointments as suggested above.
3. If the Arch/Bishop/Cardinal refuses to meet/gives excuses, ask to meet with the vicar general or the chancellor
4. If you run into a dead end, ask to meet with whomever will take you (head of diocesan personnel, head of parish life or president of the priests' council, etc).
5. When you do get a meeting with the Bishop or his designee, make sure to:
  - a. Do your homework by
    - i. reviewing the Open Letter and talking points (from FutureChurch and add your own),
    - ii. reviewing priest shortage statistics from your diocese (you can find these at <http://futurechurch.org/fpm/corpus/prieststats/>). If there is no priest shortage in your diocese talk about the global priest shortage, and the shortage in other dioceses.
  - b. Meet beforehand to decide who will speak about which issues in the open letter, talking points, diocesan priest shortage, parish staffing issues etc.
  - c. Be courteous but firm in your request that the Bishop relay your message

to the USCCB about the severe threat the priest shortage/leadership limitation is posing to the future of Catholic parish and sacramental life.

d. If possible, GET a COMMITMENT from the Bishop to raise the priest shortage at the 2015 Fall USCCB Assembly.

e. Give a copy of the Open Letter and any other pertinent materials to the Bishop. NOTE:

i. Pope Francis has called on the bishop conferences to explore new models of leadership that might benefit the church and bring them to him in Rome and there is evidence that Brazilian Bishop Erwin Kräutler has started this process.

ii. Have a copy of “Bishop Kräutler: Pope Francis Asks for Suggestions to Change Mandatory Celibacy” as evidence that bishop conferences can and should form commissions to explore new leadership models including a married priesthood and expanded roles for women.

f. Listen respectfully, thank the Bishop for his time, tell him you will prepare a summary of the meeting and send it to him.

6. After the meeting, debrief with your group to decide

a. what were the main points covered,

b. who will prepare the summary report,

c. who will send a follow up summary to the bishop and to the FutureChurch offices c/o Liz England ([liz@futurechurch.org](mailto:liz@futurechurch.org))

d. any other follow up needed

7. If NO ONE from the diocese will meet with you, consider adapting FutureChurch’s letter template to send from your group AND:.

a. Send a copy to the President of the USCCB (address on letter)

b. Send a copy to FutureChurch c/o Liz England as well. (Depending on the

response we get, we will publish which Bishops were willing to meet with their people about the future of leadership, and which were not.)