

History of the ACC Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

ACC was “formed” in September 2008—after about six months of conference telephone calls among individuals who were concerned about the state of our Church. At this meeting in Washington DC, representatives of many lay Catholic reform groups determined that we needed to educate ourselves about the authentic meaning of the Second Vatican Council, to make education materials available, to engage Catholics over the US in a discussion of the state of our Church—and to plan a meeting for the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council—to celebrate that important event.

In January 2009 ACC issued its Declaration (on the website) in which we “read the signs of the times” in our Church—and we invited others to join with us in working toward a celebration of the **Motifs of the Spirit** which had been so present at Vatican II—as a possible way of reversing the difficult situation in which we found our Church.

We concluded that the structure of our Church was flawed, that it had moved beyond the earliest Church structures toward a monarchical/feudal model that was not envisioned by the Gospels. We concluded that a more participatory, inclusive—yes democratic—model was more appropriate for modern life, particularly in the Western Democracies and specifically in the United States. We decided to continue our work on the governance theme, the return to the early Church model, and the search for a more inclusive Church. A sub-group of ACC Planning Committee (Dr. Anthony Padovano, Chair, Margaret Mary Moore, Dr. Gaile Pohlhaus, Sr. Chris Schenk, Sheila Peifer, (all theologians), and John Hushon (an attorney and theologian), together with Dan Daley (former director of *Call To Action*) undertook to draft a **Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities**. We took as models the *U.S. Bill of Rights*, the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*, and similar adaptations for Church life which had been published by some of our partners, including the *Association of Rights & Catholics in the Church* (ARCC). As the first draft surfaced, many commented that we needed to temper “rights” with “responsibilities.” We published our first draft on the ACC website in 2009.

Subsequent drafts over the next two years responded to the listening sessions and individual critiques calling for simplicity, clarity, and brevity—and the need for a clear reference to social justice. The final draft is the result of thousands of responses and hundreds of hours of work.

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