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Women's ordination group responds to bishop's ouster

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The Women's Ordination Conference, based in Washington, D.C., issued a statement May 2 reacting to the news that an Australian bishop had been removed from his diocese after expressing views on the ordination of women, among other issues. The women's group is the oldest and largest national organization working for the ordination of women into the Roman Catholic Church. The statement follows:

Just three weeks after the Vatican pressured the Maryknoll religious order to remove Fr. Roy Bourgeois, it has been revealed that the Vatican has been involved in removing another member of the clergy over his views on women's ordination. Sunday, Bishop William Morris of the Toowoomba Diocese of Australia issued a letter saying the Vatican had forced him into early retirement due to a 2006 Pastoral Letter that he issued regarding the priest shortage. In the letter, Bishop Morris had suggested women's ordination as one of a few potential solutions to the priest crisis.

After Bishop William Morris issued the 2006 pastoral letter, a small group of local Catholics complained to the Vatican which began an apostolic investigation. The Vatican assigned U.S. Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver to investigate and write a report of the situation. To this day, Bishop Morris has not been permitted to see the report that ultimately resulted in the Vatican's attempt to remove him. Rather than succumb to Vatican pressure to resign, Bishop Morris offered a compromise solution of early retirement.

Bishop Morris wrote in a letter to the people of the Toowoomba Diocese yesterday: "I have never wavered in my conviction that for me to resign is a matter of conscience and my resignation would mean that I accept the assessment of myself as breaking communio which I absolutely refute and reject and it is out of my love for the Church that I cannot do so."

"It is a sad day when the faithful, out of love for the church, offer possible solutions to address serious challenges and are punished by the Vatican," said Jim FitzGerald, Executive Director of Call To Action. "I applaud the courageous Catholics such as Fr. Roy Bourgeois and Bishop William Morris who will not allow the Vatican to bully them into silence."

"The culture of silence and bullying within the Catholic Church cannot be tolerated," said Laura Singer, Board President of Women's Ordination Conference. "Bishop Morris is an example of a priest of courage who joins the momentum of the women's ordination movement, grounded in justice and equality."

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- **Bishop's firing makes pope's priorities clear** [3], an NCR editorial, May 4
- **Support for ousted Australian bishop widens** [4], Tom Roberts, May 4
- **Australian priests offer support for deposed bishop** [5], Tom Roberts, May 3
- **Women's ordination group responds to bishop's ouster** [6], Women's Ordination Conference, May 3
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