

From the Bishop and Presiding Officer of Diocesan Convention re. Resolutions

Welcome to Convention, especially to those who will be first time Delegates.

We will have a one-day Convention this year. How can we best use the short amount of time we have together? We always have a significant amount of business to accomplish. Many Convention Delegates have reported enjoying a quick, lively, spiritually uplifting Convention filled with stories of positive mission happening in our parishes and good ministry by our missionaries around the world. What they dread is long debates about controversial resolutions that accomplish little and leave everyone feeling depressed.

A few members of our diocese have expressed a strong desire to return to a former time when every Convention involved hot debates about several controversial issues. So, as Convention Delegates, we are of different minds about Resolutions.

Over the last forty years, in two different dioceses, I have observed that when Resolutions come to Convention about complex and controversial social issues, the legislative process forces people to argue for approval or rejection. This results in winners and losers. It does not help a community to really listen to each speaker and discern God's wisdom. The time frame is short. The pressure is high. We each believe what we believe before, during and after a debate. People often leave hurt because their position did not win, upset that people on the other side said inappropriate things, or frustrated that so much time was spent on trivial details in re-crafting the resolutions. Resolution debates are often more destructive than helpful to the community of the diocese. Most parishioners don't know or care about Resolutions. State and national legislators are more influenced by individual letters, calls or emails from constituents than by a Convention Resolution.

It is very important that we discuss and reflect on controversial and complex social issues as a Christian community. That is part of our Gospel call. We don't avoid tough issues, but we need to be thoughtful about what context most helps us learn and discern together. I continue to believe that discussion forums where several sides of an issue are thoughtfully presented are much more helpful to our learning and discernment for action than Resolutions. For these reasons, early on in my episcopate I recommended that our Diocese refrain from presenting Resolutions about complex and potentially divisive social issues at Convention. We can create other forums for these kinds of conversations.

The Committee on Resolutions will review all Resolutions. It may recommend that certain Resolutions be tabled. It may express a recommendation on a Resolution or it may present a Resolution without comment. It will be up to the Convention to decide whether or not you wish to discuss and vote on a Resolution or to table it. If you are thinking of submitting a Resolution, please be aware of these guidelines.