

Training Title

Media: Getting the message out for Our Good Work

Indianapolis Facilitator

John Moynihan (Swampscott, MA)

Goals

Underscore the importance of developing relationships with people in the media

Discover ways to get the word out about your meetings

Learn the elements of a press release

Learn how to interview well for the media

Agenda

Welcome, Opening Prayer, Overview Goals, Agenda	(5 min)
Opening Remarks, The Buck Stops... Where?	(5 min)
Meeting Announcements	(10 min)
Press Releases	(5 min)
Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed Pieces	(5 min)
Local Cable Access TV	(5 min)
Dealing with the Media: The Art of the Interview	(15 min)
Evaluation, Closing Prayer	(5 min)

Supplies

Easel, flip chart paper, markers, tape

Handouts

Media Training Notes

Press Samples

Facilitator's Notes

Welcome, Opening Prayer, Overview Goals/Agenda (5 min)

Opening Prayer

A Prayer Used before Every Session of the Second Vatican Council

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
Conscious of our sinfulness,
But aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
And enlighten our hearts.

Give us light and strength
To know your will,
To make it our own,
And to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
Support us by your power
For you are God,
Sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all:
Enable us to uphold the rights of others;
Do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
Or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
And keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
May we temper justice with love,
So that all our decisions
May be pleasing to you,
And earn the reward
Promised to good and faithful servants.

You live and reign with the Father and the Son, One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Opening Remarks, The Buck Stops... Where? (5 min)

Opening Remarks

Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has.
- Margaret Mead

VOTF is an historical organization. How often in your life do you have an opportunity to make history?
- Suzanne Morse

If you are going to stay in the Church, stay loud. - Sr. Joan Chittister

We shall overcome. - Negro spiritual

This is not rocket science. Most Public Relations is just a lot of common sense and street smarts. The most important key to getting good media coverage, is to establish and maintain good relationships with those most likely to give you press coverage.

The Buck Stops... Where?

Appoint a committee to **be in charge** of publicity to include someone in charge of issuing press releases as well as someone who can respond to press inquiries. Could be a committee of one.

Meeting Announcements (10 min)

- ✓ Direct to Membership
 - Mail
 - Email
- ✓ Local Press – Press release & calendar listing. (All towns within your area.)
(usually weeklies)
- ✓ Regional Press – Press release & calendar listing. (dailies)
- ✓ Alternative Press – Press release & calendar listing. (usually weeklies)
- ✓ Diocesan Paper – Press release & calendar listing.
- ✓ Major City Paper – Calendar listing. May issue press release if major event.
(Some papers include a separate regional section with its own calendar section. If so, send press release and calendar listing to that as well.)
- ✓ Parish Bulletins – all parishes in your area
- ✓ Parish Bulletin Boards – Announcement / Poster / Schedule of meetings
- ✓ Local Cable Access TV – Calendar listing
- ✓ Local Network TV – Press release (only for major event)
- ✓ Local Associated Press – Press release (only for major event)
- ✓ Radio – Some local stations will have a calendar of meetings
Better used as a participant on talk radio.
- ✓ Local Catholic Colleges, Newman Clubs – Announcement / Poster for significant Catholic speaker(s)
- ✓ Your Web Site – See www.votf.org/Parish_Voice/pvlinks.html for examples
- ✓ List on ParishVoiceExchange@Yahoo.com

Press Releases (5 min)

The basic elements of a press release are:

- CONTACT INFORMATION – Name, email & phone # of person the editor should contact
- RELEASE DATE – Date you want it released. Otherwise type “For Immediate Release”
- HEADLINE – Grab their attention
- BODY – What you want the media to know
- RESPONSE INFORMATION – How the reader can get in touch with you for more information. Phone, email usually sufficient

Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed Pieces (5 min)

- Effective ways to get out the message
- If you use the name Voice of the Faithful, remember you may be considered by some as an official VOTF spokesperson. Be sure that what you say is not at variance with VOTF policy. If you have any doubt, contact the national office.
- See samples

Local Cable Access TV (5 min)

Often overlooked, but can be effective low cost way of promoting affiliate. Consider:

- Taping speech at meeting for later showing. (Could also be used by Voice of Renewal or by other affiliates)
- Seek assistance of local high school cable club or TV professionals within affiliate
- Appearing on an existing talk show to present affiliate positions
- Producing your own show eg. a discussion of Catholic issues. Invite local priests, nuns, authors, theologians, survivors, thoughtful laity etc.
- If you have a show - promote your schedule

Dealing with the Media: The Art of the Interview (15 min)

GUIDELINES

- Be prepared
- Be Conversational
- Be Yourself
- Connect with the interviewer

ABOUT REPORTERS

- Their job is not to print what you say verbatim. They tell readers what they think is interesting. You can't force them to print what you want
- They are rarely experts on your topic – however, they may have been following the story for a while
- They work with tight deadlines
- They want a news bite and information/message that no one else has
- All reporters are different (they are human)

PREPARATION

- Know your messages. Write them down.
- Know the publication and the reporter's background.
- Write down your goal (for messages) for the interview (remember it during the interview)
- For telephone interviews, have written materials in front of you
- Anticipate questions

PRESENTATION

- Establish a time limit for the interview before it starts
- Tell the story in the first 2 minutes
- Manage the process
- Relax but not too much
- Be yourself

TECHNIQUES

- Mention VOTF frequently
- Provide context but not entire education (don't go through whole history of question)
- Use concrete, specific examples if applicable
- STAY ON MESSAGE – do not go off on tangents
- Be wary of offering personal opinions or offering opinions on things on which you have no knowledge
- Don't be afraid of silence
- Beware of last minute questions – however, if asked if there is anything you would like to add, take the opportunity
- Don't go "off the record" – assume everything you say will appear in print

Q & A

- Answer questions directly and succinctly
- Work your key messages into answers
- Repeat the reporter's question in your answer but NEVER repeat a negative
- At the end of interviews that are not live, if the reporter does not, ask the reporter if there are any other thoughts or questions. Don't leave room for doubt or conjecture.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

- Be honest and consistent
- Don't bring up problems but confront unavoidable questions on your terms
- Be accurate. Don't guess
- If you don't know the answer, offer to get back to the reporter with an answer.
- Do not say "no comment."
- Don't argue with the reporter.

THE "COMPETITION"

- Focus on differences (Use phrases such as "VOTF is the first group to... It is providing the kind of leadership that...")
- Don't bad mouth the "competition" (the Church leadership or the archdiocese). State what you think the problem is.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Try to establish relationships before they call. Call editor. You may be able to identify likely reporter (especially with weekly) or religion reporter (with large daily.) Introduce yourself. Get to know them. Have them get to know you
- Send them info on VOTF and your affiliate. Have that info available at interview
- Treat the media as a customer. They have something you need, create something they need.
- Be available. If they call, respond immediately.
- Don't lie. Ever!

Evaluation, Closing Prayer (5 min)

Evaluation

What are some aspects of today's training that:

You liked

You thought went well

You would like to see repeated when this training is offered in the future

What are some aspects of today's training that:

Can be improved (how?)

Should be changed when this training is offered in the future

Closing Prayer

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself and in fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this You will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. I will not fear, for You are ever with me.

MEDIA TRAINING NOTES/HANDOUT

1. THE BUCK STOPS... WHERE?

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PRESS SAMPLES

The following pages contain actual examples of how affiliates across the country have utilized various forms of printed communications to spread the "Voice" of VOTF. They are divided into:

- Meeting Notices
 - Actual notices appearing in local newspapers
 - Church Bulletins
- Stories printed directly from VOTF press releases
- Stories about VOTF written by Newspaper Staff
- Stories about the Catholic Church in which local affiliate members have been quoted.
- Letters to the editor written by local affiliate members.

It should be noted that many of these stories and quotes came about *because individuals in affiliates made the effort to create relationships with their local papers*. I think this is best summed up by John Bowen of Longmeadow MA. The words were written in response to my email congratulating him on a story written by the local daily about the VOTF Convocation in Indianapolis.

"I have talked often with Bill Zajac from the Springfield Republican over the past few years. In that time we have been able to build up a feeling of mutual trust and respect for each other. He knows now that whenever he calls me I will have something to say and I know that I can also say things " off the record " (as he sometimes does) and they will stay " off the record " .

He had asked us to contact him when we got back from the meeting. The local ABC TV outlet had left a message on our voice mail prior to our getting home and were requesting an interview. I called Bill right away and told him about this and gave him our story prior to the ABC interview, which he very much appreciated. I also appreciate his writing a story that made VOTF and me sound pretty good. So hopefully the relationship will continue!"

Please feel free to contact me moynihn_john@hotmail.com if you have any questions.

SAMPLE MEETING NOTICES IN THE PRESS

The Winchester Area Voice of the Faithful welcomes Fr. Robert Hoatson Monday, June 27, at 7:30 p.m. as guest speaker to its regular free weekly meeting at St. Eulalia's Church, 50 Ridge Street, Winchester. Rev. Hoatson's talk is called "Healing from the Highway: One Priest's Attempt to Help Survivors." Rev. Hoatson was ordained as a priest in 1997 after serving as a member of the Irish Christian Brothers. For information, call Bob Morris at 781-721-1399, e-mail rmorrisvotf@aol.com or visit www.votfwinchester.org.

Voice of the Faithful — The regular meeting of the Voice of the Faithful will be held on Wed. from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Days Inn in Niantic. For further information, call Bob or Grace Marrion at 739-7710.

The Voice of the Faithful meeting of St. William the Abbot, Maria Regina and St. Barnabas will hold a joint meeting on Monday, June 13th at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at Marjorie Post Park Community Center, Unqua and Merrick Roads in Massapequa. The topic will be "Have The Tables Turned" with former Catholic priest Juan Vaca as speaker. For more information, please call Penny Duggan at 516-799-0862

Voice of the Faithful, a Catholic victims' and reform group, will meet and discuss the Showtime movie "Our Fathers" at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Passionist Monastery assembly hall, 1924 Newburg Road. Information: Mary Fran Nett, 458-7355

Queen of the Apostles Catholic: "Voice of the Faithful" meeting, following 5 p.m. Mass, Saturday. Group for structural and spirit-led changes in the Catholic Church. Kovacic Center, 520 N. Main St., Belmont. Contact Dennis Teall-Fleming: (704) 825-9600 or www.votf.org.

SAMPLE MEETING NOTICES IN CHURCH BULLETINS

The New England affiliates of Voice of the Faithful will sponsor, "It's Not History, It's Time for Renewal", an all day Conference at the Worcester Centrum on November 13, 2004. Leading authors and experts from around the country will present the latest developments and ideas on such topics as the clergy sexual abuse scandal, the Church of the future, lay empowerment, developing lay spirituality, and parishes of the future. For tickets and more information www.votf.org (617)558-5252 or contact Charlie Forbes at (781) 598-9897

Join us at [DATE] at [LOCATION] to discuss Voice of the Faithful's July 8-10 Convocation, "The Laity Speak: Accountability Now" in Indianapolis, IN. XX Voice of the Faithful affiliate will be sending XX of individuals to this meeting, and we want your ideas on the subject of Bishops' accountability, financial accountability, and lay accountability.

To RSVP or for more information, contact XX of the Voice of the Faithful affiliate at XX

Stories printed directly from VOTF press releases

Three VOTF members to attend conference

Thursday, June 23, 2005

Three members of the Concord Area Voice of the Faithful will attend a major convocation discussing accountability in the Catholic Church in the United States. "The Laity Speak: Accountability Now" will be held in Indianapolis on July 8 to 10, and is being sponsored by Voice of the Faithful, the lay Catholic reform organization that formed in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis.

Attendees at this convocation will examine some of the major issues facing the Catholic Church. They will focus on the lack of accountability within the Church, with a specific concentration in three areas - bishop's accountability, financial accountability, and lay accountability, and will look at creating some common sense approaches to addressing those challenges. This event will help individual Catholics from across the country shape the future of the Catholic Church by providing them the tools to make the idea of accountability a reality within the Church.

The Concord Area VOTF has several members in the Concord area, including individuals from Holy Family Parish, Concord; St. Elizabeth's Parish, Acton; St. Irene's Parish, Carlisle; St. Joseph's Parish, Lincoln; and St. Michael's Parish, Bedford. Three people from the Concord affiliate will be going to Indianapolis because VOTF's strong belief that it has a responsibility to be part of solving the problems of the Church.

The Concord Area affiliate has sponsored educational discussions by clergy, survivors of abuse, diocesan representatives, legislators and others to help all become more knowledgeable about abuse and other issues facing the Church. VOTF meets on the first and third Wednesdays of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Holy Family Parish Center in West Concord. All are welcome.

For further information call Fran Vozzella, 978-263-2874.

Statement Issued by the South Coast Voice of the Faithful Group:

A committee of Catholic lay men and women in the Diocese of Fall River representing local affiliates of the national organization known as Voice of the Faithful has been meeting with Bishop George W. Coleman's representatives periodically since February 2004.

These meetings derived from a May 2003 directive when then bishop elect, George W. Coleman, asked all pastors to refrain from allowing members of a Catholic lay organization called Voice of the Faithful from using parish facilities for their meetings. Shortly after the installation of Bishop Coleman, VOTF requested to meet with him to seek the removal of his ban on VOTF's use of parish facilities to conduct its meetings and activities.

In February 2004, Bishop Coleman agreed to meet with representatives of VOTF and up to the present time VOTF had felt that the meetings were useful to both parties.

Currently, however, VOTF has been unsuccessful in contacting the Bishop's staff to arrange another meeting and is consequently left with the impression that Bishop Coleman has terminated the meetings without notification to VOTF and with several issues still unresolved. Several efforts to communicate with the chancery office, including telephone calls and a registered letter for the purpose of scheduling our next meeting have been unsuccessful.

Local affiliates of VOTF have been conducting their meetings in rented spaces including rented halls of other faith communities.

The organization continues to work to promote its three stated goals of support for victims of clerical sexual abuse, support of priests of integrity and the reform of those administrative structures that have limited lay participation, transparency, and accountability in our church administration. In addition, VOTF continues to monitor hierarchical administrative decisions and to study the documents of Vatican II that serve as a guide for lay responsibilities in the Roman Catholic Church.

All of the VOTF meetings are open to Catholic lay people and the general public. The next meeting will be July 21 at the Friends' Meeting House, Route 6 in Mattapoisett, at 7 p.m. We will view and discuss a tape of Vatican II documents narrated by Michael Himes, SJ of Boston College.

SAMPLE STORIES ABOUT VOTF WRITTEN BY THE MEDIA

Archdiocese May Prefer for this Voice to Be Silent

On a beautiful July morning at **Ken Sauer's** Old Northside home, with the garden in full riot and fresh coffee served in mugs noting the 50th anniversary of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, it's hard to believe there's a fly in paradise. But there is.

Sauer, 57, is a cradle Catholic, active in his Northside parish. So is **Mary Heins**, 64. They talk, fondly, of their "near perfect" experiences growing up Catholic; he in New York City, she in rural Iowa.

Their well-sown sense of identity got a rude upheaval in 2002. Outraged after learning of years of cover-ups by bishops on behalf of sexually abusive priests, they joined Voice of the Faithful. The group responded to scandals in Boston and beyond.

This weekend, Voice of the Faithful will hold its second national meeting. Hundreds of Catholics will convene at the Indiana Convention Center to take action on "The Laity Speak: Accountability Now."

Voice of the Faithful has three stated objectives: to support survivors of priest abuse, to support priests of integrity, and to work for structural changes within the church.

That last one is the stickler. On June 23, Indianapolis Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein issued a statement saying he had met with Heins and Dr. James Muller, the Indy native and Boston cardiologist who founded the group. Buechlein supports their organization's first two goals. "However, when I have asked the leadership to tell me what they mean by their third goal, they have been unable to articulate its meaning or implications," he wrote. The archdiocesan newspaper refused to run an ad for Voice of the Faithful.

Sister Diane Carollo is a spiritual adviser to the local chapter of Catholics United for the Faith, a lay apostolate dedicated to defending church teachings.

Her comment: "Some of the statements made by Voice of the Faithful create the impression that its members do not fully grasp or appreciate the historic and unchanging character of the Catholic Church."

In plain words: The church is not a democracy. Lay people can butt out, with the exception of those few who are hand-picked to fill token roles.

This is a regrettable standoff. In its haste to hold the fort, the hierarchy appears to be more concerned about maintaining its culture, a sad but familiar theme. Voice of the Faithful wants more laypeople in decision-making roles. Given the troubling history, that is appropriate.

In its own nod to Catholic tradition, Voice of the Faithful will give out bookmarks this weekend featuring the likeness of Cardinal John Henry Newman. A convert who died in 1890, Newman called the laity the truest test of Catholicism.

"The church would look foolish without them," he said. Wise words, worth somber reflection.

Group suggests ways for diocese to spend reserve

How much money should the Diocese of Rockville Centre set aside for a rainy day?

Voice of the Faithful, an organization of lay Catholics seeking more accountability from church leaders, is releasing an analysis today that finds the diocese is sitting on excess cash reserves of about \$180 million.

The organization is urging Bishop William Murphy to spend some of that reserve on worthy local causes, such as increased educational spending, new programs for immigrants and increasing benefits for retired nuns.

"We are raising the question of how much is too much, and what is the best use of this money?" said **Dan Bartley**, co-director of the local group of 2,300 lay Catholics formed three years ago in response to the clerical sex-abuse scandal.

Diocese spokesman Sean Dolan, however, criticized the lay group for failing to "understand the budget concerns the finance council has to wrestle with."

He said that all the reserve money was needed to operate a diocese with 1.5 million Catholics, 134 parishes and many programs. "There is no extra money in there," he said.

Each diocesan bishop is required by church law to appoint a finance council with expertise in money matters to safeguard the church's assets and to monitor investments. Dolan pointed to a March 2004 statement by the council that labeled the reserves only "adequate" and noted that many diocesan buildings are aging, which the council said meant that major capital expenses would be required for them.

The lay group's audit comes as the diocese is launching its 2005 Catholic Ministries Appeal, the diocese's main fund-raising drive, which raised about \$10 million last year. Besides the appeal, the diocese's other sources of income are a percentage of Sunday collections, direct donations, bequests and investment income.

"The timing is suspect," Dolan said of the group's report, charging that linking the issue of cash reserves with the launch of the annual appeal was "wrong and irresponsible."

The diocese, whose fiscal year ends Aug. 31, is expected to publish its 2004 financial audits in a few weeks, according to Dolan. He said it was "weird" for the lay group to release its statement before the official numbers came out.

The group's audit was done by **H. Richard Grafer**, a retired partner in the Arthur Andersen accounting firm and a **Voice of the Faithful** member.

Using the diocese's published financial statements for fiscal year 2003, Grafer said the diocese has as much as \$180 million in cash and liquid securities beyond what general accounting standards require to be kept in reserve for nonprofit corporations.

Grafer said that if the diocese did not receive another dollar through its collection basket or annual appeal, it could continue to operate for about three years and nine months, as long as revenues such as tuition and Medicaid reimbursements continued to come in.

Additionally, the diocese could fund any needed project by tapping into its estimated \$10 million to \$20 million a year in investment income.

Grafer will present his finding tonight at the group's monthly meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation church in Manhasset. The group is calling on Murphy to consider creating a second council to evaluate spending priorities.

But that's not likely to happen, Dolan said yesterday. He said Catholics can use their parish councils to express concerns.

"The existing structure is there for input from the people in the pews," he said.

The group's suggestions for additional spending include bolstering educational resources for Catholic schools, including increasing salaries for teachers; creating schools for new immigrants that would teach English and job skills; contributing to affordable housing in the region; and improving the care and living conditions for retired nuns.

"The sisters and nuns dedicated their lives to educating our children, and when they retire, they can't even afford an air conditioner," said Kevin Connor, the group's treasurer.

STORIES ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, IN WHICH VOTF MEMBERS ARE QUOTED

4 more accused priests named By Darren Barbee, Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH - The Fort Worth Roman Catholic Diocese on Friday named the eight priests who have been accused of sexual misconduct with minors since the diocese was founded in 1969.

Four of the names had already been made public through lawsuits, diocese statements and other means. The other four, not previously identified, are the Rev. James Reilly, the Rev. James Hanlon, the Rev. John Howlett and the Rev. Joseph Tu Ngoc Nguyen, according to a statement by the diocese...

Jean Frie, coordinator of the Catholic group **Fort Worth Voice of the Faithful**, said the organization asked for the release of the names more than a year ago. She said that the names should have been released sooner but that now victims can begin to heal.

"There could be people out there thinking they're the only ones," she said.

With the names out in the open, Frie said, the diocese's many innocent priests are no longer blemished.

Abuse law opposition criticized; Voice of Faithful upset with Pilarczyk letter to lawmakers

DAYTON - Catholic Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk and other Ohio bishops were criticized Thursday for opposing a proposed law that would allow child abuse victims to file lawsuits alleging incidents that occurred as long as 35 years ago.

Leaders of **Voice of the Faithful** gathered in front of the Old Court House to call for support of the law, which also would require clerics to report child abuse.

They criticized Pilarczyk, who heads the Cincinnati archdiocese, for writing to Ohio legislators calling the bill unconstitutional.

"Our take is this is about exposure," said **Mike Knellinger**, chairman of **Voice of the Faithful's** Dayton affiliate. "Personally I hope that people have their day in court and the perpetrators are exposed."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR WRITTEN BY VOTF MEMBERS

Every good Catholic learns that to earn forgiveness you must confess your sins, do penance and amend your life. Nowhere in catechism do Catholics learn to evade responsibility for their actions, deny their role in grave wrongdoing and cling to a shameful status quo as if nothing's amiss.

John McCormack, now in his seventh year as bishop of New Hampshire, has refused repeated calls to resign in the wake of the clergy sexual-abuse scandal that has caused unending pain to generations of victims. It's been enough to drive countless people away from the church.

Yet there's a ray of light that pierces through the darkness brought on by McCormack and his disgraced ex-boss, former Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston. Nearly half of the 112 seniors at Trinity High School, a private Catholic school in Manchester, signed a petition last week calling upon McCormack not to deliver the baccalaureate Mass.

In typical devil-may-care style, McCormack refused to honor their wishes. Instead, he preached that they should "set aside distractions" and forgive, forgive, forgive.

What McCormack deems "distractions" are acts of bravery in which outraged individuals reject the bishop's history of stonewalling and obfuscation and seek to hold him accountable.

We congratulate the students for their courage in standing up for a principle that McCormack clearly doesn't understand: justice. For these students, celebrating baccalaureate Mass in the presence of a man who only grudgingly apologized for protecting abusive priests until he wilted under the hot glare of a criminal investigation, is outrageous.

In a May 2003 letter to McCormack, **New Hampshire Voice of the Faithful** - an organization that seeks to restore trust between the Catholic laity and hierarchy - accused the bishop of engaging "in a pervasive pattern of behavior to conceal and cover up evil actions." This is hardly the kind of leader who will promote healing and guide a besieged church out of the muck.

It's true that McCormack has never been proven guilty of a crime in a court of law. But through his actions (actually, evasions), he continues to tar the church he claims to love.

McCormack didn't listen to the 50 students who wanted him to stay away from their baccalaureate Mass. But the students listened to him respectfully rather than boycott the event or lead a protest.

Unlike McCormack, they set an example that can make us all proud.

- Portsmouth Herald

Voice of the Faithful's Plan for Churches

Archbishop O'Malley identified three reasons for reconfiguration: a shortage of priests, a population shift, and reduced Mass attendance yielding fewer donations.

Closing parishes doesn't address these problems. It may quickly generate cash, but it doesn't provide any long-term solutions. Closing parishes should be a last resort.

Clearly, the Archdiocese has underestimated how critical faith communities are in parishioners' lives. Many parishes serve as cultural and spiritual centers. Closing them will destroy deeply rooted faith communities, alienate more Catholics and further reduce Mass attendance and donations. This perpetuates an ongoing downward spiral.

This proposal provides help for the limited number of priests, may increase Mass attendance and financial contributions and addresses the need for short-term cash. It recognizes the sanctity of our faith communities and the importance of preserving Catholic schools, the incubators for future generations of **faithful** Catholics. It also offers a future vision of expansion, not a downward spiral of further contraction.

Some parishes must close. These could include exceptionally small, seasonal or inactive parishes, and parishes beyond financial recovery. We encourage an objective re-examination of the data to minimize that number. We must protect parishes that provide vital social services and minister to multi-cultural and low-income congregations.

The Archdiocese has targeted 65 parishes to generate a substantial financial "nest egg" for the future and avoid closing additional parishes in the near future. Some of these parishes are financially stable and could continue without external financial assistance.

The priest shortage is a complicated issue that bishops must carefully examine over time. As a short-term remedy, we recommend lay parish administrators. This is in complete harmony with church teachings and Canon Law. Lay administrators are very successful in other parts of the country. The Albany, N.Y., diocese has 19 parishes with lay administrators, allowing priests to focus on administering the sacraments and providing pastoral outreach to parishioners.

Pastoral outreach could be the catalyst for the restoration of faith in the leadership of the Archdiocese. It also has the potential to increase Mass attendance.

The need for quick cash can be satisfied by selling shuttered schools, empty parish halls, closed convents, undeveloped land and buildings owned by the Archdiocese. Other options include consolidating rectories, alleviating the isolation felt by some priests living alone. Surely these men would welcome the camaraderie.

Archbishop O'Malley holds in his hands the power to decide the future of the Archdiocese of Boston. The stakes have never been higher. We urge him to implement this plan.

MICHAEL GUSTIN

Voice of the Faithful, Westford-Chelmsford Area Parish Voice

Discontent Among the Faithful

We were pleased to see your editorial "Hear Their **Voices**" (Sept. 19). As members of Long Island **Voice of the Faithful**, we know that paid advertisements submitted to The Long Island Catholic newspaper have been refused and that pastors have been directed by the diocese not to print any **Voice of the Faithful** meeting notices in parish bulletins. So we are glad to read the facts in a newspaper.

Two committees of five people, representing the diocese and **Voice of the Faithful**, met two times before the diocese abruptly declared severe preconditions for further meetings. The tone was "Take it or leave it!"

Added to this is the strategy the diocese seems to use in dealing with the more than 40 sexual abuse lawsuits in state court, and the uncooperative attitude toward the advocacy group Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests when it recently opened a Long Island office. These actions were preceded two years ago by the prohibition of the use of parish facilities to the 2,000 members of Long Island **Voice of the Faithful**. The use of power is in a static state, with the laity not consulted.

If Bishop William F. Murphy were to attend a **Voice of the Faithful** meeting (we've invited him), we think that he would be pleased to find prayerful, committed, faith-filled Catholics concerned about their church.

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