

Voice of the Faithful

NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

PRIEST OF INTEGRITY AWARD

Presented to

THE REV. JAMES J. SCAHILL

NOVEMBER 13, 2004, WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS



Voice of the Faithful, a grassroots organization of concerned Catholics formed in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis and committed to ensuring that the people of God are heard, honors the Rev. James J. Scahill, dedicated priest, compassionate pastor and selfless advocate for all those wounded by clergy abuse, as the recipient of its Priest of Integrity Award.

Presented this day at the organization's New England Conference, the award recognizes Father Scahill's extraordinary efforts over the past two-and-a-half years on behalf of victims and survivors and their loved ones.

Father Scahill has shown himself to be a Priest of Integrity in a myriad of ways as pastor of St. Michael's Parish in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Responding to the call of parish members that he stand and work actively for truth and justice, and with the nearly unanimous support of his congregation, Father Scahill withheld from the Diocese of Springfield its share of parish collections until a convicted pedophile was stripped of both priesthood and the Church's financial support.

Since taking that initial stand, and facing its repercussions, Father Scahill has persevered, broadening his attempts to assist abuse victims and champion their cause, stating repeatedly that the Church cannot be made whole until they have received the compassion and justice they deserve.

Refusing to let myopic obedience obstruct or overcome his moral integrity, or to be cowed by fear of reprisal, Father Scahill has stood nearly alone in his diocese, an example of

personal decency and spiritual conviction. He has challenged the hierarchy and cooperated with legal authorities to pursue justice and has worked with the media to spread truth. He has borne the public rebuke of his bishop and the silent rejection of his peers, drawing strength and support from lay Catholics and religious women in the parish, the diocese and beyond who share his vision of what the Church should be and must become.



Even in his most highly visible moments, when the fires of controversy have raged around him, he has continued to quietly minister to a parish of 2,100 families and to others who seek his compassion, counsel or comfort. His door and his heart are open to anyone in need of solace or guidance – in particular any whose lives have been irrevocably altered by the abuse or exploitation of clerics and the inaction or outright complicity of Church leadership.

Father Scahill has demonstrated his profound determination to help build a healthy and holy Church that is true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and dedicated to the service of his people. While critical of the institution's failures, he constantly urges the faithful and fallen away alike to trust in God and to partake of the grace and comfort of the sacraments. He lives the message: Keep the faith, change the Church.

It is in light of his deep humanity, clear priorities, unyielding conviction and unflinching courage in standing up for and with the victimized that we proclaim Father Scahill's achievements and celebrate his character, for they exemplify what priesthood should be today and must be in the Church of the future.

Robert P. Morris

Robert Morris, Chairman of the New England Conference