

“
I believe that Voice of the Faithful is the work of the Holy Spirit inspiring new efforts for reform and renewal in our church at this time.”

Thomas Groome
Boston College Department of Theology

Accountability **Now!** for the Catholic Church



KEEP THE FAITH. CHANGE THE CHURCH.

VOTF **Mission Statement**

To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church.

Voice
OF THE **f**AIITHFUL

Filling a **Vital Need**

Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) began as a Boston-area organization born of the clergy sexual abuse scandal that made headlines in 2002. It quickly became apparent that the problem of abusive priests being protected by bishops and transferred from parish to parish was a nationwide – and indeed international – phenomenon. In response, **Voice of the Faithful** became a national and international organization. We are now 35,000 members located in every U.S. state and 37 foreign countries.

The Scandal Is Not **“History”**

While the U.S. Catholic bishops would like the laity to believe that the clergy sexual abuse scandal is now history, clearly it is not. For example, in 2006:

- **In Chicago**, Cardinal Francis George admitted that both he and archdiocesan officials ignored both Illinois law, and the Bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, allowing known pedophile Fr. Daniel McCormack to continue to abuse children.
- **22 dioceses** were found to be in noncompliance with the above Charter (though Chicago passed).
- **In Philadelphia**, two former city prosecutors accused the Archdiocese of Philadelphia of failing to seriously address the problem of sexual abuse by priests, thus continuing to endanger parish children.
- **In New Hampshire**, the Attorney General threatened legal action against the diocese of Manchester because the diocese was in noncompliance with a previously agreed upon pact to prevent child sexual abuse.
- **In Santa Rosa, CA**, Bishop Daniel Walsh admitted that he delayed reporting admitted serial pedophile Fr. Xavier Ochoa (*in violation of state law and the Charter*) allowing Fr. Ochoa to escape to Mexico.

The laity is just now discovering the costs of the culture of secrecy that made this scandal possible: the destroyed lives of those who have been abused; the suicides; the lack of trust; the empty pews; and the settlement costs have already topped more than \$1.5 billion in the U.S. alone. In the wake of this scandal, efforts are being made in some dioceses to bring about greater lay involvement in the Church. Improvements in the hierarchical and secretive culture that made the clergy sexual abuse scandal possible are occurring – in many cases with the help of **Voice of the Faithful**. But much, much more needs to be done.

Our Goals: **Building Bridges**

Voice of the Faithful has 3 goals:

1. To support survivors of clergy sexual abuse
2. To support priests of integrity
3. To shape structural change within the Catholic Church

VOTF is keenly aware of the importance of building bridges to restore trust between the laity and the hierarchy of bishops and priests who lead the Church. We are committed to working within the Church for active lay involvement in the governance of temporal affairs – including finances, personnel, and administration. We do not seek to change Church dogma. We seek to encourage greater openness around issues of finances, personnel, and administration to build up the Church and restore trust.

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton said:

“My hope is that Voice of the Faithful will continue to spread throughout the United States and that in every part of our country, every parish church, people will say, ‘Yes, I have a responsibility. I will discover what I can do to help bring about the change in the Church that is needed.’ That’s the only way we’re going to have true reform that is needed right now.”

Join Us in Taking **Responsibility**

Won’t you join with other devoted Catholic members of **Voice of the Faithful** and say: “Yes, I have a Baptismal responsibility”?

Sign up as a member of our national organization and find out how you can bring about change in the Catholic Church at a local, national, and international level. Receive free regular bulletins about what we are doing. Join a local affiliate and participate in actions that help improve financial accountability and the safety of children in your area. Support our work with your financial contributions.



Making a **Difference**

Here are just a few ways that **VOTF** members are working for church reform:

- Extending the Statutes of Limitations for child sexual abuse crimes.
- Conducting education programs for members keeping them informed about the latest in Catholic scholarship and their rights under Vatican II.
- Working to bring about effective finance councils at both the parish and diocesan levels to ensure financial accountability and transparency.
- Dialoguing with their Bishops about the implementation of sexual abuse prevention programs and greater lay participation in church affairs.
- Writing a protocol dealing with credibly accused priests in partnership with the Franciscan Provincial in California.
- Restoring the good name of an unjustly accused and deposed pastor, securing for him a much desired appointment and ensuring lay involvement in the choice of his successor.
- Sponsored legislation in Massachusetts focused on financial disclosure, which led to the unprecedented disclosure of the Archdiocese's financial state of affairs with promises of accountability and transparency in the future.
- Opposing the closing of “vibrant parishes”, succeeding in securing the reopening of several suppressed parishes. Producing a guide to mounting a Vatican Appeal which has been used by threatened parishes throughout the country.
- Ensuring a lay voice is heard on all issues concerning the Church. The nation's press recognizes **VOTF**, and virtually every day the phone rings at **VOTF**'s national headquarters with a call from a reporter researching a “Catholic story”. Local news reporters also routinely seek out local members.

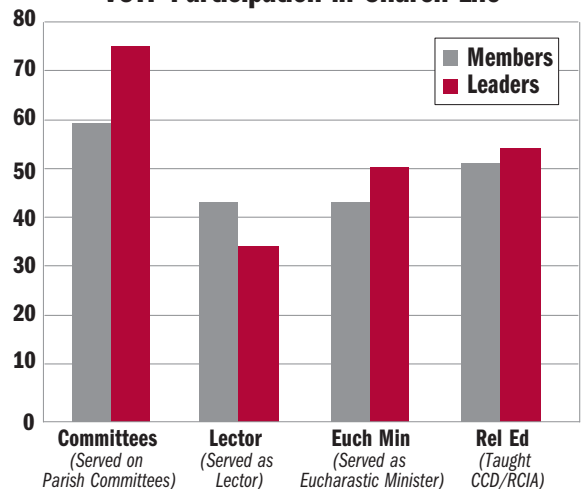
VOTF Members Come from the “Heart of the Church”

A national study* of **VOTF** membership confirmed that **VOTF** members are among the most committed people in their parishes, actively practice the Catholic faith, and have a rich personal history of Catholic education.

VOTF Members Compared to National Survey

| | VOTF Members % | National Survey % |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| CATHOLIC EDUCATION | | |
| Elementary | 70 | 49 |
| High school | 62 | 29 |
| College/University | 57 | 12 |
| MASS ATTENDANCE | | |
| Weekly | 65 | 34 |
| At least monthly | 23 | 30 |
| Never/seldom | 10 | 36 |
| HOW OFTEN PRAY | | |
| Daily | 79 | 63 |
| Occasionally | 18 | 32 |
| Never/seldom | 2 | 5 |
| IMPORTANCE OF CATHOLIC CHURCH | | |
| Among most important | 62 | 44 |
| Quite important | 28 | 37 |
| Not very important/ not sure/no answer | 11 | 19 |
| REGISTERED MEMBER OF PARISH | | |
| Yes | 85 | 68 |

VOTF Participation in Church Life



* Study conducted by Dr. William D'Antonio & Anthony Pogorelc, Life Cycle Institute, Catholic University of America, 2005

What People Are **Saying**

“The renewal of the Church in America will not be possible without the active presence of the laity. Therefore they are largely responsible for the future of the Church.”

Pope John Paul II

“VOTF has emboldened a once silent laity to speak out about the Church’s problems.”

Mary Pat Fox
VOTF President

“God is alive and thriving in His Church and you (VOTF) are the proof. Your response to the victims, the survivors, and the whole Catholic community as we painfully live through this tragedy, is a response to God’s promptings.”

Fr. Thomas Doyle, O.P.

“Fifty years from now, Voice of the Faithful will be remembered as the tiny pebble that rolled down the hill and became the biggest thing to hit the Church.”

Sally Vance-Trembath, Ph.D.
VOTF Vice President

“How can anyone possibly think that what Voice of the Faithful asserts they are about to do – give a voice to the faithful in the machinations of the Roman Catholic Church – is not the single major determining issue in the Church today?”

Sr. Joan Chittister

“Thank you for all you do to shape the Church in our nation and to deepen the margins of accountability between those in authority and those who pay the bills.”

Justice Ann Burke
Former Chair, National Review Board

“If the laity are ever to be given voice in the Church, we must speak out. ...If for no other reason, this is why organizations like VOTF are so vital.”

Paul Lakeland
Professor of Theology, Fairfield University

“Voice of the Faithful continues – each day – to do something that moves us one more step closer to reform.”

Jim Post, Ph.D.
VOTF Founder and Past President

Join **Voice of the Faithful**

NAME

ADDRESS

E-MAIL

PHONE

- Please sign me up as a member of VOTF.
- Please send me information about how I can organize an information session about VOTF in my parish or area.
- Please accept my enclosed contribution of _____ to assist you in carrying on your important work.

Publications – Free to VOTF members

In The Vineyard



Highly acclaimed bi-weekly e-zine of news on VOTF affairs and stories of Catholic interest.



Twice monthly e-mail notice highlighting both problems and progress within our Church.

VOTF News

Daily e-mail review of current news articles related to our mission and goals.



Newsletter of VOTF affairs mailed to members without e-mail.

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VOICE
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