

In the Vineyard

April 11, 2008

In this issue: Upcoming papal visit spurs VOTF ad in *New York Times* AND a free opportunity for *you*; VOTF tracking of embezzlements in churches indicates ongoing mismanagement; a legislative win for protecting children in Kentucky; a parish success story – voices raised in respect are heard; Jason Berry’s book *Vows of Silence* is making its documentary debut; good news about young Catholics; and more.

NATIONAL News

So many generous supporters came forward for a **VOTF ad** timed to coincide with the papal visit that VOTF was able to purchase full-page space in this week’s (Tues., April 8) *New York Times*. The drive to raise funds for the ad paid VOTF a bonus demonstrated in a broad range of revitalized interest in Catholics’ determination to be heard by Church leadership (as an example, see Letter to VOTF in this issue). Read the ad and learn more here. Click here to read VOTF’s statement on the ad’s publication.

If you were unable to contribute to the cost of the ad, you can still make your voice heard by signing the **VOTF Petition to the Pope and his fellow bishops**. The petition specifically notes the historically bypassed voice of the laity. Sign on for transformation in our Church by adding *your own voice of the faithful* here. And read the VOTF letter from president Dan Bartley that has been sent to the Pope. In a powerful recap of VOTF’s raison d’être, Dan invites the Pope to meet with victims of clergy sexual abuse and hear their stories; lead Catholics toward a morally and financially accountable Church; and embrace the gifts of the laity.

The **National Representative Council** will meet in Philadelphia PA over the weekend of April 25-27. **Welcome!** VOTF welcomes Kevin Mondloch to the VOTF National Representative Council. Kevin was elected by members of Region 7 (WI, IL, IN) to replace Janet Hauter, who resigned to take up her new post as VOTF national vice president.

SURVIVOR Community News

The USCCB has assigned to the month of April the focus of “Child Abuse Prevention” so it is timely that Marci Hamilton’s new book will appear later this month. Watch for *Justice Denied: What America Must Do to Protect Its Children* (Cambridge 2008). The *Vineyard* will publish a review in a future issue.

Because the USCCB site (www.usccb.org) notes that parishes and dioceses throughout the U.S. will mark Child Abuse Prevention month, please let us know how your parish/diocese observes this urgent cause – write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

DON'T FORGET! SNAP's 2008 Conference July 11-13 in Chicago. Go to www.snapnetwork.org for details.

CROSSES & CANDLES: If you're in New York City April 18th, there's a vigil and reading of survivor names at the Lott Gallery. Check out the details here.

DIOCESE/State Watch: Click [here](#) to read about "significant progress" in protecting children in New Hampshire and a big win in the Kentucky legislature; VOTF St. Petersburg FL works with the diocese; and bishop in Belleville IL replies to priests' request for his resignation.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

Readers who applauded **Jason Berry's book *Vows of Silence*** can look forward to the documentary based on the riveting story of Vatican power. As Garry Wills has said, "Some think of the churchly sex scandals as a cluster of passing episodes. But the deeper and continuing scandal is less a matter of sex than of power – the power over human lives that fosters, protects and covers up clerical arrogance." **Initial screenings** are as follows: April 3 Milwaukee, preview for Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests at United Methodist Church; April 14 New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival, Prytania Theatre 7PM; April 22, University of Rhode Island, Kingston RI. 7 PM; April 23, Georgetown University, Washington DC. 7PM; May 2-3, Documenta Madrid Festival, Spain. For more information, visit www.VowsofSilenceFilm.com or call 504-865-1793, 504-329-7522.

Author **David Gibson** has a new blog at beliefnet.com and he is looking for your input. The blog is called "Benedictions" and will run through Pope Benedict's April 15-20 visit to Washington and New York, which he is covering. You'll find the "Benedictions" blog here: <http://blog.beliefnet.com/benedictions/>. Also note Beliefnet's new Pope Page: <http://www.beliefnet.com/pope2008/index.html>

As noted in the previous *Vineyard*, the latest report from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (<http://religions.pewforum.org/>) has been published. InsiderCatholic.com notes: "This study on the changing religious habits of Americans found that the Catholic Church has experienced the greatest net loss in membership. We asked 34 prominent Catholics from various backgrounds to answer the question, 'Why Are So Many Leaving the Catholic Church?'" For the responses to this question, go to http://insidecatholic.com/Joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3009&Itemid=19&ed=1 and click along.

A recent *National Catholic Reporter* story notes: "Although many **young adult Catholics** are interested in church ministry they find it difficult to connect their career plans or talents with available ministries, according to a survey released this year. The survey, 'Young Adult Catholics and Their Future in Ministry,' was commissioned by the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project, a joint project involving six national Catholic organizations and funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc.... More than half of the

respondents said the church needs to move faster to empower laypeople in ministry.”
Read more at <http://ncrcafe.org/node/1701>.

Boston College magazine includes a feature article on VOTF at
http://bcm.bc.edu/issues/winter_2008/c21_notes/whose-voice.html

QUOTE for our time: “The fact is that women are rising in every religion on earth. Maybe that's really the Divine word we're missing.” Go to Joan Chittister’s column at <http://ncrcafe.org/node/1705>.

LETTER to VOTF

In the very few days VOTF was soliciting funds to pay for an ad that would coincide with the Pope’s visit (April 11-15), many of our members communicated their support even beyond their generous contributions. One such supporter sent the following message:
[EXCERPT]

“I wasn't sure about contributing to the ad until I read it. You all are brilliant! You balance truth with diplomacy and wrap it in love....

Our Yakima diocese has been in crisis since a church staff member fixing a printer found pictures of naked boys on his priest's computer three years ago. The bishop placed the priest in a parish with a school while the priest was still under investigation for child porn by the FBI. When the media found out there was a priest under investigation who was working in a parish, all hell broke lose. (Or perhaps hell was already loose here.) Eventually, the bishop's right hand man, who pressed the bishop to reveal the identity of the priest under investigation, lost his job after 25 years in ministry to the Catholic church. And, of course, the staff member who found the pictures lost his job after many years at the parish in a parish ‘re-organization.’

It took me a very long time to figure out how all this could happen and how the bishop could sleep nights. I have come to the conclusion that first, the bishops have been raised in a climate of acceptance of pedophilia. I truly believe that they have convinced themselves that it's just not the big deal that everyone is making it out to be. Because it is something that has probably always been part of their lives, they simply think we are over reacting. Second, I think the bishops know full well how monumental the number of victims is. They know that if all (or even a third) of the victims came forward, the entire US Catholic church would be bankrupt and they would have NO power left. I think they convince themselves that while it is sad that these victims are still suffering, it would be a greater tragedy for the Catholic Church in the United States if it financially collapsed. They sacrifice the few for the many. At least, I'm surmising that's their justification.

And so I am grateful for all your efforts, struggles and work. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!! Carol Roth

- Following Carol's letter, this item appeared in the *Yakima Herald Republic*: <http://www.yakima-herald.com/stories/3008>. VOTF member Robert Fontana is quoted as saying, "Robert Fontana of Voice of the Faithful, a group seeking reform in the Catholic Church, said the abuse allegation makes the case larger than just missteps by the bishop."

DIOCESE/State Watch

New Hampshire: According to the *Boston Globe*, "The latest audit of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester shows 'significant progress' in its compliance program to prevent child-sexual abuse" For the full story, go to http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/04/02/diocese_sees_progress_vs_abuse/. You also might want to check out VOTF member Carolyn Disco's analysis of the audit results. [link to SSWG page with that info]

VOTF Kentucky: Good news from Region 5 VOTF representative Susan Vogt: "I am proud to pass on the news that Kentucky has just unanimously passed a bill that strengthens penalties for child sexual abuse. Although both the Louisville and Northern KY Affiliates worked on passing this bill, special thanks goes to Shannon Whelan who put her life on hold for many months to shepherd this through both the House and Senate."

From Shannon Whelan: Today the Ky. Senate has passed the legislation that we have all been working on for the last 10 months. Because of the widespread support for this bill, it has passed with only additions that make internet use part of the bill. It passed the House and the Senate unanimously." Among the bill's provisions:

- The bill takes child sexual abuse in the first degree up to 16 years of age and up to 18 years of age if the abuse is by a person in a position of trust. This is a felony if the perpetrator is 21 years old or older.
- It extends the statute of limitations for up to 5 years after the 18th birthday for any misdemeanor. Misdemeanors, however, apply only if the abuser is 18, 19 or 20 years of age.
- HB 211 makes not reporting abuse a felony if it occurs a third time.
- The bill also adds additional language to present legislation to make it consistent with the American Psychological Association's definition of sexual abuse.

Kentucky increased the civil SOL several years ago. One of the Senate leaders commented that they had a lot of calls about this legislation and another said that the newspaper in Paducah is following the progress and calling regularly. Together we have made a difference for today's and tomorrow's children.

Update on Belleville IL (see VOTF statement here): A *National Catholic Reporter* note says the Bishop Braxton has refused to resign. "More than half the active priests of the Belleville diocese have signed a public statement calling for Bishop Edward Braxton to

resign, citing frustration with his leadership and their conclusion that ‘he has lost his moral authority.’ In response, the bishop issued a letter to Catholics in the diocese dated March 20, Holy Thursday, in which he stated he intends “to serve as bishop of the diocese of Belleville for as long as the Holy Father wants me to do so.” The bishop asked priests to read the 1,700-word letter at Masses on Easter weekend.

VOTF St. Petersburg FL worked with the Diocese of St. Petersburg in promoting a Day of Atonement proposed by Cardinal Claudio Hummes, OFM, Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy. The Cardinal asked that there be world-wide Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament offering reparation and purification of the priesthood following the sins of clergy sexual abuse. He requested this occur in all church places world-wide with the prayers of priests and the faithful. The Victim Assistance Ministry and VOTF collaborated for the service, which was held on March 11.

PARISH Voices Heard

What may be most important in this experience is that a genuine transformation took place within the very space where God’s community comes together in Christ – the church itself. Here is the VOTF mission statement in action – “prayerful voices attentive to the Spirit.”

When parishioners were told in their parish bulletin that their participation in the Prayers of the Faithful would be terminated, they pursued what in hindsight might look like the obvious response but in Catholic Church behavior is, arguably, exceptional.

First, VOTF member Rich Moriarty spoke individually and then by letter to the pastor, as well as to the other parish priest. Then Rich, with support from several others in the parish community, decided he might simply and respectfully speak his prayer at the time of the Prayers of the Faithful. He paid the reader of the Prayers of the Faithful the courtesy beforehand of advising him that when he began the Prayers of the Faithful, he (Rich) would be contributing.

When Rich spoke his prayer (see below), 10 more Mass attendees did the same.

Less than one week later, parishioners received notice from the pastor that their participation in the Prayers of the Faithful would be re-instated.

Among the several lessons learned in this instance is that protest has many roads from which to choose; that commitment to a particular course is best shared beforehand; and that, like protest, listening by leadership also has many “styles” – from the immediate to the postponed, from person-to-person to a Letter to Parishioners.

Rich’s prayer that morning:

“Excuse me Monsignor, I have a prayer: I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the members of the Clergy and Laity in our Church, and in this Parish, toward a closer

cooperation.... and that that co-operation be based on mutual understanding, respect and dialogue.... Lord, hear our prayer.”

Rich said later, “Maybe it was my own emotional investment in this but I really thought the ‘Lord, hear our prayer’ following my prayer was one of the strongest I’d ever heard.”

Amen!