

In the Vineyard

April 20, 2006

“To reach out in forgiveness does not exclude, in fact it must be accompanied by, holding people accountable and struggling to make that happen.” *Bishop Gumbleton in a talk delivered during the VOTF Mid-Michigan Healing Service on April 2*

In this Issue:

In a decisive nod to victims of clergy sexual abuse, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal by the archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahony, and two unnamed priests who wanted to block a subpoena for internal church records. See DIOCESE/State Watch for more;

BREAKING News: As Cardinal (then Archbishop) O'Malley promised months ago, the Archdiocese of Boston has responded (April 19) to calls for financial transparency in the Archdiocese. Click here for the Financial Transparency Report for fiscal years 1004/2005. The Archdiocese press release is available here. Read the VOTF Boston press release on our web site.

Bishop-Accountability.org notes that the Chicago archdiocese published an incomplete list of clergy accused of sexually abusing a minor. Calling it a “heartless information gap,” the organization provided a list of 28 additional names; **two conservative Catholic organizations have joined in the call for Cardinal George’s resignation**. See more in NATIONAL Focus;

Dr. Patricia Ewers, chair of the USCCB National Review Board, spoke at the April 4 VOTF SW Florida meeting. She was no happier with compliance audits than others concerned about protecting children. See Commentary for recap and comments from VOTF members – “NRB Chair Speaks with VOTF”;

From calls for a cardinal’s resignation to quiet witness, **Good Friday vigils** marked the Easter Triduum for many; see VOTF Louisville, KY Commentary – “Good Friday Vigil: Bearing Witness”;

Fr. Tom Doyle says, “The clergy sex abuse phenomenon has changed the way Catholics communicate with bishops. Accustomed to always controlling every situation, the bishops have reluctantly learned that this is no longer the case.” See more in Commentary;

VOTF update – Read “Chicago, VOTF and Next Steps” in Commentary.

DIOCESE/State Watch

Los Angeles, CA: The April 18 *Boston Globe* reported (excerpt): “The Supreme Court yesterday cleared the way for prosecutors to obtain sex-abuse records from the Catholic Church, a decision that could affect hundreds of cases in which priests have been accused of molesting children. In

the child molestation case, the court turned down an appeal by the archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahony, and two unnamed priests who wanted to block a subpoena for internal church records. The order lets stand a state-court ruling that allows the Los Angeles County district attorney to obtain pastoral counseling records that could reveal the priests' confessions and any psychological treatment.” The full story is at http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2006/04/18/court_oks_access_to_church_records?mode=PF. For additional coverage:

- The April 19 *New York Times* editorial at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/19/opinion/19weds2.html>; the *Los Angeles Times* at <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-me-priests18apr18,1,6295239.story?ctrack=1&cset=true>; the online Catholic News Service at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/briefs/cns/20060417.htm#head3> and Associated Press coverage in SanLuisObispo.com at <http://www.sanluisobispo.com/mld/sanluisobispo/news/14362641.htm>.
- **VOTF Affiliate Alert:** If your affiliate has voted on a response to the Cardinal George/Chicago situation, please send your affiliate’s statement to pthorp.ed@votf.org. Please put “Chicago” in the subject line.

Joliet, IL: Only two weeks ago, Bishop Imesch of the Joliet diocese won broad support from survivors and reform advocates for his decision to post on the diocesan web site the names of diocesan priests against whom credible accusations of sexual abuse with a minor had been made. Last week, a Chicago newspaper reported that during a Holy Week Mass, Bishop Imesch touted a priest who had only recently been accused of abusing a minor. One person in the congregation stood up and objected. Go to the *Herald News* online at http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/heraldnews/top/4_1_JO12_PROTEST_S1.htm.

Chicago, IL: “**Boston-based Bishop-Accountability.org** said Monday that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago had published an incomplete list of clergy accused of sexually abusing minors and offered a roster with 28 additional names. The alternative list released by [BishopAccountability.org](http://www.bishopaccountability.org) includes 13 religious order priests, one deacon, three extern clergy, four priests accused posthumously, three priests accused of sexual misconduct with adults and one resigned priest for whom an allegation was never substantiated by the church.” Go to <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/west/chi-0604180285apr18,1,7477890.story>. Also, visit www.snapnetwork.org.

- From Medill News Service/Northwestern University: “Two conservative Roman Catholic groups joined their liberal counterparts on Wednesday in calling for Cardinal Francis George to resign. Michael Tario of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Prevention of Clergy Sex Abuse, and Paul Picchietti of the Roman Catholic Faithful lambasted George as being unresponsive to parishioners' concerns about sexual misconduct by priests.” Go to http://cbs2chicago.com/topstories/local_story_102194557.html

VOTF Long Island, NY reminder: The Diocesan Finance Council petition drive will be conducted on the weekends of April 29/30 and May 6/7. Read the petition at www.votf-li.org.

Philadelphia, PA: The *Philadelphia Inquirer* notes, “Three more Catholic priests who sexually abused boys have been removed from the clergy, including one said to have molested ‘countless children’ for years, bringing to 17 the number of Archdiocese of Philadelphia priests defrocked in the church sex scandal.” For the full story, go to <http://go.philly.com/priests>.

Ireland: The *Irish Independent* reports that the Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan, has appointed Dr. Helen Buckley, a Trinity College academic, to monitor implementation of the Catholic Church's new child protection guidelines in the Republic. Dr Helen Buckley was a member of the inquiry into the diocese of Ferns which highlighted over 100 allegations of child sex abuse by 21 priests from 1962 to 2002. Dr. Buckley’s charge is to review and assess how adequately the bishops are operating the new child protection procedures contained in “Our Children, Our Church.”

WORKING GROUP Update

Voice of Renewal/ Lay Education Working Group: The Voice of Renewal/ Lay Education Working Group is featuring an annotated bibliography of some of the many interesting books available to awaken and nourish our VOTF mission. To check out Virtual Study Groups, Faith Sharing Models, Educational Resources, and Book Summaries, go to VOR_VOTF-owner@yahoogroups.com (underscore between VOTF and VOR) to have access to all of these materials and more. Let us know what you think at pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Working with Prayerful Voice in Maine: The Northern York County VOTF will hold our Annual Prayer Service in Support of Victims and their families on Tuesday, April 25th at Most Holy Trinity Church on Main St. Saco at 7 p.m. The Portland affiliate and the Maine Council will support us in this special endeavor and will encourage other Catholic groups to attend. Our goal is to increase participation by all who hope and pray for healing and renewal. Contact has been made with Jara Goodrich, Principal Harpist, Portland Symphony Orchestra, and she has agreed to accompany the liturgy with us. An invitation has been extended to the Knights of Columbus to also participate in whatever manner they deem appropriate. A planning committee will be convened to design the format and to choose the most meaningful liturgy. If you would like to help in this regard, please e-mail me at jbuonomo@maine.rr.com.

SURVIVOR Community News

VOTF Winchester Area: Thanks to the generosity of two talented artists in our group (Harvey Cote and Francis Baratta), we are selling note cards to benefit clergy abuse survivors. The cards cost \$10 for a package of 8, containing two cards each of four different designs by our artists. All proceeds will benefit survivors. The cards are blank inside, and contain the VOTF web address on the back. To preview the cards and order, visit our web-site at www.votfwinchester.org and print and mail the order form with your payment. Please contact Bob Morris at rmorrisvotf@aol.com with any problems or questions. Thank you for your support!

A Call for Vigilance: *USA Today* posted the following on April 12: “The Catholic Church is having early success in fighting proposals in state legislatures that would permit people claiming they were sexually abused as children to sue priests and other church officials long after the alleged offenses occurred. Measures proposed in nine states would suspend statutes of limitation and allow lawsuits to be filed regardless of when an alleged offense took place. The proposals are patterned on a 2003 California law that allowed a one-year window for suits to be filed there without regard to the statute of limitations.” See http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-04-12-catholics_x.htm.

- “No common profile among priest abusers found” according to the NRB and noted in *National Catholic Reporter*, April 14, at www.ncronline.org; also, referencing Manchester, NH, see “Deficiencies found in diocese’s child protection policies” in the same issue. The April 6 issue of *In the Vineyard* also provides coverage of the Manchester, NH situation.

CALENDAR Watch:

Sunday, APRIL 23: Eugene Kennedy address “The World, the Flesh and the Catholic Church” at Trinity High School, Newton, MA. See details at www.ourladysfriends.org.

Saturday, APRIL 29: VOTF Bridgeport, CT and Fairfield University to co-sponsor Fr. Richard McBrien talk on “The Election of Bishops: Return to Tradition” at Fairfield University. Go to www.votfbpt.org for details.

Sunday, APRIL 30: Boston College is marking the 50th anniversary of *American Catholics and the Intellectual Life* by historian Msgr. John Tracy Ellis. A forum will focus on “State of Mind: The Intellectual Life of American Catholics.” Go to the Events calendar at www.bc.edu for details.

COMMENTARY, Etc.

“Communicating With Bishops” – Fr. Tom Doyle, Part 1 of 3

“NRB Chair Speaks with VOTF” – recap of Dr. Ewers’ talk at VOTF SW Florida

“Good Friday Vigil: Bearing Witness” – Vince Grenough, VOTF Louisville, Kentucky

“Cardinal George, VOTF and Next Steps” – VOTF update

“Advice from Bishop Gumbleton” – VOTF Mid-Michigan

Letters to the editor (write to pthorp.ed@votf.org): The separation of institution and faith question in the last *Vineyard* sparked some thoughtful responses; the April 10 issue of *America* magazine offers an interesting perspective on “New Standards for Pastoral Care” and notes some surprising implications for all of us, including bishops. Go to <http://www.americamagazine.org/gettext.cfm?articleTypeID=1&textID=4727&issueID=568>.

QUOTE for our time:

Thanks to Anne Southwood, VOTF Boston, for this Henri Nouwen find on “The Authority of Compassion”:

Mostly we think of people with great authority as higher up, far away, hard to reach. But spiritual authority comes from compassion and emerges from deep inner solidarity with those who are "subject" to authority.

The one who is fully like us, who deeply understands our joys and pains or hopes and desires, and who is willing and able to walk with us, that is the one to whom we gladly give authority and whose "subjects" we are willing to be.

It is the compassionate authority that empowers, encourages, calls forth hidden gifts, and enables great things to happen. True spiritual authorities are located in the point of an upside-down triangle, supporting and holding into the light everyone they offer their leadership to.

COMMENTARY

Communicating with Bishops: Does Dialogue Begin with Capitulation?

Thomas P. Doyle, O.P., J.C.D.

[Your comments are welcome at pthorp.ed@votf.org. This is Part I of a three-part commentary. Watch the May 4 and 18 issues of *In the Vineyard* for Parts II and III.]

The Catholic Church's political structure is hierarchical by design, which means that all power flows down from the top. Furthermore, all real power resides in specific individuals and not in collegiate groups or corporate structures. This has been the case throughout the history of institutionalized Catholicism. This political structure has created a culture surrounding the leadership. This culture has in turn produced pre-conditioned responses to different forms of communication.

The hierarchical governmental system has given rise to two things: the first has been the *style* of government, meaning the *way* authority is exercised. The style is generally monarchical, which means that the focus is on the leader and not on the subjects. The second phenomenon has been the ascendance of an aristocracy – the clergy. Power, privilege, prestige and financial control are vested in individuals and all of these are members of the clergy. Though lay persons have been included in many levels of church administration, all real power is in the hands of a small group of celibate, male clerics. Even here, the power is limited to a select group of clerics, the bishops.

In 1906 Pius X issued an encyclical which described the political structure of the Catholic Church:

This church is in essence an unequal society, that is to say a society comprising two categories of persons, the shepherd and the flock.... These categories are so distinct that the right and authority necessary for promoting and guiding all the members toward the goal of society reside only in the pastoral body; as to the multitude, its

sole duty is that of allowing itself to be led and of following its pastors as a docile flock.

This statement captures the enduring belief about the fundamental nature of the institutional church. Though Vatican II defined the Church as the “People of God” the fact remains that the official theology and law still hold that the hierarchical division is of divine institution. Nevertheless, this description of the Christian community has shallow roots in authentic theology and no verifiable basis in scripture. In other words, the constant claim that Christ intended a hierarchical structure when he founded the Church is based on nebulous historical evidence. In fact there is no indication from the writings of the first three centuries that Christ ever intended to found a church as such or that he consciously established a hierarchical system. The Apostles emerged from the Last Supper as potential leaders of the future “church” though they hardly knew it at the time. That they emerged as archbishops, newly ordained by Christ the High Priest is a segment of Catholic mythology but not an essential and proven element of authentic ecclesiology.

The above statements sum up not only a theological position but a deeply rooted attitude that permeates the consciousness and emotions not only of bishops but many lay people as well. The concept of a stratified ecclesial society enables the fallacy of clericalism which enters directly into all communications with the hierarchy. The bishops believe that they are singled out by the Almighty as the anointed teachers, legislators, executives and judges of Christ’s community here on earth. The faithful are taught from their first years of catechetical instruction to believe this teaching and therefore to hold the bishops in the highest respect and esteem.

The Catholic Church rests on a sacramental system. Catholics are taught that the seven sacraments are the fundamental encounters with Christ. Belief in the official theology of the sacraments is essential for a Catholic. The sacraments are necessary for salvation, as we are taught. The way to the sacraments is through the ordained clergy, especially the priests, but ultimately the custodians of the sacraments are the bishops. Catholics learn early on that salvation is mediated through the Church but not the Church as a vast throng of believers scattered throughout the world. It is mediated through the Church’s ordained leaders. These leaders determine who may receive a sacrament. They control access to the means of salvation and as such, they command great respect and certainly fear.

Traditionally the obvious power imbalance determined the quality of communications with the hierarchy. The hierarchy’s belief in its divine origin formed the emotional response to any communications that were critical or challenging. Often, rather than respond to the substance of a criticism or challenging question, a bishop reacts defensively, questioning how his authority can possibly be questioned. The fundamental issue is lost in the perceived threat to the bishop’s authority. This attitude is enforced by the church’s own political structures which reserve all power to bishops and limit the participation of collegiate or corporate bodies to consultation.

The clergy sex abuse phenomenon has changed the way Catholics communicate with bishops. Accustomed to always controlling every situation, the bishops have reluctantly learned that this

is no longer the case. Since the canonical structures of the Church provide no basis or avenues for communication based on the concept of equality of participants, the aggrieved have sought relief in the civil courts of the U.S. and several other countries. The bishops were faced with a power equal to and in many ways surpassing their own. The result has generally been defensiveness, de-valuation of the abuse survivors, and anger.

The frustration and anger engendered in tens of thousands of sex abuse victims as well as millions of laity over the sordid revelations of abuse and cover-up has changed the way a significant segment of the Catholic and non-Catholic population communicates with bishops. As the “scandal” unfolded and more and more was revealed in the media and in the courts, trust and respect for bishops rapidly eroded and with it the traditional belief in the nature of the episcopacy.

In short, communication has been challenging, confrontational and driven by anger, distrust and cynicism. Those directly involved with the sex abuse phenomenon, including victims, their loved ones and supporters, the media and attorneys, have been astonished, disappointed and saddened by the arrogance, dishonesty and lack of compassion manifested by many bishops. In time the bishops realized that they have lost the trust and respect of many. Yet the fundamental attitude of superiority still permeates most conversations about significant issues facing the Catholic Church.

This anger and mistrust has prevented true communication. Many bishops have immediately focused on the challenge to their authority rather than the reason for the anger. It certainly appears that the horror of the sexual abuse of countless children, minors and vulnerable adults has been overshadowed for many bishops, by the affront to their dignity, the rejection of their authority and the disrespect for their persons and their office. In fact, most of the anger experienced by the victims, their supporters and others seeking reform and change is grounded in the enormity of the crimes and the perceived inability of many bishops to fully realize the gravity of the situation. They have reason to be angry and disrespectful of bishops. As many have said time after time, “they just don’t get it. It’s all about them.”

NRB Chair Speaks with VOTF

VOTF representative Jane Merchant, Maine

On April 4 Dr. Patricia Ewers, the current chairperson of the National Review Board (NRB), spoke at a VOTF Southwest Florida gathering in Naples. Ewers agreed on short notice to speak to the VOTF affiliate in an open forum and to answer questions.

Ewers noted three factors in consideration of the incidents of abuse: the abusers, the victims, and the environment. Of those who abused, 40% did it only once. [See letters below that challenge this figure.] The other group, the serial abusers, will not be stopped; they are clever and know how to hide. A substantial number of victims were troubled children from troubled homes. The environment in which abuse takes place is a critical aspect of abuse prevention and needs careful assessment and understanding.

Again, Ewers noted that not enough has been done and said that the present audit process is inefficient. Cardinal George called for an outside audit after the failure in the Chicago diocese. That audit, the Defenbaugh Report, is available on line at www.archdiocese-chgo.org.

One questioner asked, "When Keating left, he said it was like dealing with the Cosa Nostra. Justice Burke said it was 'disgusting.' What will you say when you leave?" Ewers said that in the beginning many bishops were "not on board" but acknowledged there has been an enormous change of attitude among the bishops; they realize they have a serious problem on their hands. **The culture in which the bishops operate is another issue; they have a vow of silence. Rome treats abuse as a sin, not a crime. In non-English speaking parts of the world, it is treated as neither. The bishops since the 1980's have pled with Rome to remove bad priests and to act on bishops who won't act.**

Another questioner suggested that gay priests were the cause of the problem. Ewers responded that research indicates no higher percentage of homosexual abusers than heterosexual. She cited sexual immaturity as the greater cause. There should be a psychological profile of those entering the priesthood, but there has been no training for it. It was interesting that her response to this question was greeted with significant applause.

"I see incremental change, not transformative change," she said. "The current bishops were selected because they believe in the culture. The clerical culture is the problem."

How can we impact the Vatican was another question. The voice of the people has little influence at the Vatican but Ewers noted that the presence at the Vatican of the newly named cardinal, William Levada (formerly of Oregon and California) could help this situation. She emphasized the need for respectful dialogue and expressed a hope for fraternal correction among bishops. She also noted that bishops have agreed to outside audits and that there is a call for standards that would allow auditors access to personnel files, currently not available to them.

I asked about the Chicago situation and the outcome she expects. She believes that the Cardinal George situation could be the impetus for profound change. She is hopeful that if Cardinal George follows through, it will be transforming. Ewers noted that at every step along the way, the situation broke down—everything that could go wrong did.

[The March 25 and April 6 issue of the *Vineyard* have additional coverage of the breakdown in Chicago.]

RESPONSES to Jane's recap of Dr. Ewers' talk:

Carolyn Disco, VOTF Manchester, NH:

One thing that stands out to me in Ewers' talk is her reference, "Of those who abused, 40% did it only once." All that I have learned in the last four years calls me to question if that is really true. It may be that only one victim/survivor came forward, and others have not. Survivors I have met tell me they know of additional victims who will never come forward, and the profile of an abuser with just one victim is not the typical one in the psychological literature.

Note how often when a priest is accused, it brings forward additional victims. The bishops refuse to release all names, so how can a survivor know whether his or her perpetrator has been identified?

From Donna Doucette, VOTF Boston, MA:

There is a caveat here that should be addressed, however. We do not actually know if a priest abuser is a "typical" abuser. Calls have been made, more than once, for the bishops to finance studies that would tell us if a priest abuser is typical of pedophiles and others who sexually abuse minors or actually differs in some ways, whether the "culture" in seminaries or parishes somehow attracts/enables/supports such abusers, whether Church structure provides a haven/attraction for such abusers (much as abusers in the larger community are often drawn to playground and school settings because victims are so easily accessed there), and so on. I do not know if such studies have been mounted. If they have not, this might be an area to spotlight -- keep calling for the study, for example, or offer to set up funding for it.

CARDINAL George, VOTF and Next Steps

The failure of Cardinal George to protect children in the archdiocese of Chicago is now well known and well documented, thanks to the independent audit conducted at the Cardinal's request and then made public on the archdiocesan web site at www.archdiocese-chgo.org. The response to the incidence of yet another child sexually abused by a priest has raised many voices of protest within Voice of the Faithful and all around us. However, the messages vary even while the desired outcome does not. Some want to work with the Cardinal to repair the holes in the Charter that, in effect, enabled another abuser to hurt a child. Some want to remove the Cardinal from official positions in the Church for his personal judgment that placed children at risk. Let's take a look at who is saying what. The outcome in Chicago might well determine the extent to which lay voices will be heard there and elsewhere as all of us move toward an accountable Church with greater lay involvement.

Some VOTF affiliates have called for the resignation of Cardinal George from his position as Archbishop of Chicago and/or his position as vice president of the USCCB. One affiliate has called on VOTF National to stand by its 2004 resolution (<http://www.votf.org/Bishops/resolution918.html>). Other VOTF affiliates have gathered and concluded a different response – they will defer to and support the decision of the Chicago affiliates. Conservative organizations (one of which proposed that Catholics withhold Easter donations), such as Roman Catholic Faithful, have also called for Cardinal George's resignation either from the USCCB or as head of the Chicago

archdiocese or both. On February 25, the survivor support organization SNAP called for Cardinal George's resignation (http://www.snapnetwork.org/snap_statements/2006_statements/022506_resignation_cardinal_george.htm).

The reform organization Call to Action (initially launched by bishops in 1976) issued a statement that came just shy of calling for Cardinal George's resignation: "In light of the absurdity of the Chicago diocese passing the audit, Call to Action asks that Cardinal George use his power to replace diocesan self-audits with independent audits, and independent review boards in every diocese. If Cardinal George will not call for this change to protect our children, then for the sake of the people of Chicago, for the sake of our children across the country who are affected by the failures of U.S. bishops, we ask that he step down."

VOTF president Mary Pat Fox has stated that the National VOTF position is to support the decisions of affiliates who must decide for themselves the management of conditions in their own dioceses ([LINK to MP letter](#)). (VOTF National previously called for Cardinal George to step down from his position as vice president of the USCCB.) In the case of Cardinal George, the Chicago affiliates have chosen to continue dialogue with the chancery in the expectation of collaboration that will lead to substantive change in their diocese; they have not ruled out a call for the Cardinal's resignation from his position as archbishop of the Chicago diocese. A significant outcome of this approach is the offer by the Cardinal of a May 12 meeting date. It is also significant that the Chicago archdiocese has met several of the demands made by VOTF Chicago in their letter ([LINK](#)) to the Cardinal.

Some affiliates and many individuals do not see the breakdown in Chicago of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People as a Chicago problem. By virtue of Cardinal George's place in the USCCB and as head of one of the largest Catholic dioceses in the US, these Catholics identify in Cardinal George a national profile; as a Cardinal, that stature is globalized.

On Good Friday, individuals, survivors, and survivor support organizations gathered in Chicago, Boston, and elsewhere in the US to remember the victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse (see Commentary – "Good Friday Vigil: Bearing Witness"). Some specified the resignation of Cardinal George; some (VOTF Boston) chose to raise awareness of the Chicago situation and demand compliance with the intent of the 2002 Charter as well as call for the elimination of statutes of limitations in sex crimes against children; and some came simply to bear witness. Several who posted information about their vigils invited priests and bishops to join them.

Executive Director of VOTF Ray Joyce and VOTF president Mary Pat Fox note that an early and ongoing determination in VOTF was and remains dialogue. If the Chicago breakdown brings about genuine, cooperative dialogue between Church leadership and laity in that archdiocese, Catholics everywhere have a new model with which to move forward with Church reform. Much depends on the outcome of the May 12 meeting.

At present, dialogue and discernment continue among all of these groups. This has not been a quiet time; it has often been acrimonious; and while there is ongoing disagreement, there is ongoing listening. All voices are chiseling out a place in this discussion. We cannot afford to do less.

Watch upcoming issues of *In the Vineyard* for updates on the Chicago crisis – and do let us know what *you* think. Write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Good Friday Vigil: Bearing Witness
from Vince Grenough, VOTF Louisville, KY

On Good Friday afternoon, about sixty people stood in silent vigil in front of Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago for over an hour. We were there to support those who have been sexually abused by priests or other representatives of the Catholic Church. We were there to call for the resignation of Cardinal Francis George. Most of us carried large signs, photos or other objects that spoke of our purpose for being there. I saw two large "healing quilts" sent by the Healing Alliance (formerly the Linkup). One woman from Louisville carried the First Communion dress and photo of a survivor, who was raped on that special day by a priest, a trusted family friend. He continued to abuse her frequently for four more years. That child's sister, two years older, suffered the same horrible abuse.

The vigil group was composed of people from many different places and different groups. I saw people I knew from Illinois, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Arizona and Indiana. I saw people who were members of Voice of the Faithful, Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, and Call to Action. Several were individuals who had heard about what we were doing and came to join us in vigil. The mood of the group was serious, but somehow joyful as well.

As we stood on the sidewalk across from the Cathedral about four hundred people inside prayed the Stations of the Cross. Police who were there, inside and out, were professional and courteous. Several media representatives took pictures and spoke to individuals. It was a beautiful, breezy day.

As people came out of the Cathedral several of them walked across four lanes of busy State Street traffic to tell us they agree with us - "100%". Passing cars and trucks often honked their horns supportively. Some walkers stopped and chatted with us. Many approved of what we were doing. I saw many simply ignore us, and one woman who verbally challenged one of the vigilers.

Eight of us from the Louisville VOTF affiliate made the trip to Chicago. Before we left, we met with about a dozen others, including survivors, in front of our Cathedral of the Assumption for prayer. The prayer time began with the statement attached below. It ended with a group blessing of those of us who were going on the trip. Our prayer leader

then gave each of us a small, cut yellow tulip in a water vial. She asked us to care for our flower, unhandy as that would be, as though we were caring for an abused person.

This day especially, I was proud and grateful to be a member of Voice of the Faithful. I think almost everyone there had similar feelings.

LOUISVILLE VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL SPEAKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED BY PRIESTS

When you were young, we all believed that our priests would always treat you with respect and love, and would never harm you in any way. We were wrong to trust some of them, the ones who abused you. Instead of treating you with respect they raped your body and your soul. We now wish we could have known what they were doing to you so we could have stopped them and cared for you.

RESPONSE: For this we are sorry and we beg your forgiveness.

When you were finally mature enough to tell what had happened to you, we all trusted that our bishops would believe you, protect you and try to heal your wounds. Instead, they listened to their attorneys and focused on denying responsibility, avoiding scandal and saving money. We should not have trusted them, but we did.

RESPONSE: For this we are sorry and we beg your forgiveness.

When our bishops promised that your abusers would never be in a position to abuse a child again they were often not being truthful. When our bishops said they would correct one another fraternally, we trusted that they would do that, but they have not. We should not have trusted them, but we did.

RESPONSE: For this we are sorry and we beg your forgiveness.

When some of you filed lawsuits as a last resort to stop this evil abuse of more children, some Catholic people said you did it only for the money, and by saying this they made you victims again. That was very wrong. We should have thanked you for forcing us to see the evil that infects our Church.

RESPONSE: For this we are sorry and we beg your forgiveness.

ALL: We tell you this: We want to be able to trust our bishops but we cannot and will not trust them until they stop everything else they are doing, get down on their knees, admit their guilt, beg your forgiveness and make your healing their first priority.

ALL: We promise you this: We will demand that our bishops apply to themselves what they have applied to our priests – if they knowingly allow the abuse of one child by a priest they themselves must immediately be removed from clerical ministry.

ALL: We say all of these things because we care deeply for your welfare and your healing.

Advice from Bishop Gumbleton: Forgiveness and Justice are a Must

VOTF Mid-Michigan sponsored a healing service at which Bishop Gumbleton offered compelling thoughts on the abuse crisis. The following was submitted by VOTF member Harry Grether. Many of the prayers and acknowledgements used during the service were adapted from VOTF Prayerful Voice Liturgies. For more information on the Mid-Michigan affiliate contact hgmmtvotf@charter.net.

Nearly one hundred and fifty people gathered for a service at Blessed Sacrament Church in Midland on Sunday, April 2nd to seek healing and prayerfully address the sex abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. The Healing Prayer Service included a reflection by retired Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit. In January 2006, Bishop Gumbleton spoke in support of legislation that would create a “window” of opportunity for survivors of sexual abuse to have their “day in court.”

In his reflection, Bishop Gumbleton referred to the World Day of Peace statement for January 1, 2002 written by Pope John Paul II after the events of September 11, 2001. In the statement, Pope John Paul II spoke of “a shattered moral order” and explained that the way to restore it is through “a response that combines justice with forgiveness.” Bishop Gumbleton applied the Pope’s words to the abuse scandal in the church and further explained, “From our own hearts, we must learn to reach out to forgive rather than to hold a spirit of vengeance, resentment, or even hatred. That does not mean that we fail to work for justice. In fact, true reconciliation, ‘true peace is the work of justice’... And so to reach out in forgiveness does not exclude, in fact it must be accompanied by, holding people accountable and struggling to make that happen.”

Bishop Gumbleton’s reflection was followed by an “acknowledgement of wrongs” in which the Bishop, a priest from the Diocese of Saginaw, a nun representing all religious, and a member of the laity each acknowledged the sinful acts and criminal offenses that have been committed and asked forgiveness. People in attendance were also invited to come forward for personal prayers.

For many members of the Diocese of Saginaw, the Healing Prayer Service was the first opportunity they had to come together as Church to express their pain and sorrow over the crisis.

LETTERS to the editor

Readers of the 4/6 *Vineyard* were asked their thoughts on a question raised by Purdue University sociologist James Davidson, “Is there a gap between the faith and the

Church?" The article appeared at www.thetidings.com/2006/0324/signs.htm. We thank our correspondents for their thoughtful responses.

"Obviously, that article by James Davidson distorts VOTF's position. It is precisely because of our Faith, that we need to bring about some changes in the Church. That has always happened, and hopefully always will! The structures and actions of the church need to live up to and respond to our faith in it." Fr. Leo Sprietsma, OFM

"There is a mighty divide that began when the clergy deemed the laity to be too involved in church business. In New York, Bishop John Hughes abolished the board of trustees at St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in 1838 by comparing them to the English penal laws in Ireland that persecuted the church. His Irish immigrant congregation identified with his description. Originally, priests served spiritual needs and trustees were responsible for the physical operations of the church including the priests' stipends. Hughes would become his own best fund-raiser traveling to Europe to solicit funds and establishing a common fund to serve the few churches. So began the saga of the parish priest as manager in a growing corporation. Today, we witness many clergy incapable of financial management or overzealous in church finances with spiritual guidance low on their goals. With fewer priests, this fact is becoming more evident to congregations that never seemed to pay attention to where their money was going. The story at Immaculate Conception in Scarsdale, NY is a prototype to what the future holds---congregations going on a financial strike to get the Archdiocese of New York to listen." *Terri Cook*

"Thank you for asking the question. I may be rather parochial in my view, but my identification with church has split in three, in a sense. On the one hand, I identify with my parish church, and especially with a small group from this parish with whom I enjoy support, prayer and a sense of community. On the other hand, I have some identification with my diocese, where matters of clergy sexual abuse are handled well, even though some other actions of the diocese are less than what I wish. And then there is the identification with the church as a whole, which has definitely weakened as a result of my understanding of how the church has handled sexual abuse charges internationally. Having said that, I think the universal church is still doing a decent job of standing for social justice issues, for instance. Not so good a job of responding to the vocation crisis by being willing to ordain married priests and women.

For me, it's an issue by issue matter. And a bishop by bishop matter. I have my dissatisfaction with several aspects of the Church, and I guess I would hope that as VOTF and others press for greater accountability that this becomes part of the way the Holy Spirit is re-vivifying the Church, a painful part and one that I wish weren't necessary, but I think history shows that an awake Church can benefit from hearing criticism and acknowledging the truth of it."