

## In the Vineyard

April 5, 2007

“He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end.” *John 13: 1*. Voice of the Faithful wishes you renewed hope and lasting joy in Easter’s promise.

### NATIONAL News and Updates

**VOTF welcomes five new affiliates:** St. James VOTF in Kansas, Ohio; St. Thomas More VOTF Bowling Green, Ohio; Mahoning Valley VOTF in Youngstown, Ohio; East Grand Rapids VOTF in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Eastern Iowa VOTF in Davenport, Michigan.

**National Representative Council (NRC) Update:** See text of recently passed resolutions on support for survivors; on a white paper to consider church finances and accountability; and on effective church management systems. The report also includes the voting tally. A proposal calling for ecclesial review of mandatory celibacy for priests is also posted; a vote is expected next week.

**Report to Board of Trustees from Council** summarizes Council election results throughout the U.S. Click [here](#) to identify your representative on the NRC.

Voice of the Faithful has been blessed from Day #1 with the committed, energetic and gifted voices of many Catholics. **Frank Murray**, who died recently after a short battle with leukemia, was one of them. Frank served VOTF as NRC representative from Region 7 (WI, IL, IN). See “Remembering Frank Murray” from Ron Dubois.

From *National Catholic Reporter*: “The chairman of the U.S. bishops’ **Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People** told a Georgetown University audience March 20 that he opposes establishing a searchable Internet-based registry containing the names of clergy facing credible accusations of sexual abuse.” See [http://natcath.org/NCR\\_Online/archives2/2007a/033007/033007h.php](http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2007a/033007/033007h.php)

### DIOCESE/State Watch

#### AFFILIATE Highlights:

**VOTF Long Island NY** will host a Faith Convention on Saturday April 14. For details, go to <http://www.votf-li.org/>.

**VOTF Bridgeport CT** and the chair of Catholic Studies at Fairfield University will present “Follow the Money: Financial Accountability in the Catholic Church” on Saturday April 28. For information, go to [www.votfbpt.org/](http://www.votfbpt.org/); VOTF Bridgeport CT was

also the host recently of a talk by Sr. Theresa Kane on a vision of Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (see Commentary); the affiliate also has another means of communicating with other diocesan Catholics in “**Our Voice**.” Check it out on their web site at <http://www.votfbpt.org/OurVoice-March07.pdf>.

**VOTF Greater Cincinnati** will host “A Gathering for Justice” with Fr. Tom Doyle, Richard Sipe and Patrick Wall, co-authors of *Sex, Priests and Secret Codes*. The conference will be held at Xavier University in Cincinnati. For additional information, call 513-231-5271 or email at [votfcincinnati@aol.com](mailto:votfcincinnati@aol.com).

**Good News for the protection of children in San Diego CA?**: The diocese has released the names of over three dozen “credibly accused priests” inclusive of their church service records as far back as 1928. See the *San Diego Union-Tribune* at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20070331-9999-1n31priests.html>. Also, “Officials from the Catholic Diocese of San Diego say they have named the priests accused of sexually molesting minors in San Diego, but critics are saying that the church's list is missing almost as many priests as it named.” See <http://www.nbcсандiego.com/news/11494566/detail.html>.

**No question about Good News in Idaho**: SNAP Great Plains Michigan applauded a new Idaho law that extends the statute of limitations for reporting sexual abuse. For details, visit <http://www.snap-greatplains.org/>. **More good news for protecting children in Springfield MA**: “In a legal setback for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield, the Massachusetts Appeals Court has upheld a lower court ruling requiring the diocese to turn over thousands of pages of documents from sexual abuse claims to its insurance companies. In an 11-page ruling, Justice Fernande R.V. Duffly ordered church officials to turn over most of the 7,000 pages of documents at the center of a two-year legal skirmish.” See the *Republican* at <http://www.masslive.com/metrowest/republican/index.ssf?/base/news-8/117463463530020.xml&coll=1>.

**Bad news for survivors in Chicago IL**: Speaking of the Catholic Church-led lobby effort against an extension of the state’s statute of limitations on reporting incidents of sexual abuse, ABC 7/Chicago said, “It is a lobbying effort led by the Catholic Church that would prefer to handle years-old cases of priest sex abuse internally with counseling, guidance and sometimes settlement payments.” For the full story, go to <http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=investigative&id=5161636>.

**SITE-Seeing, Etc.**

The so-called “doctrine of **mental reservation**” has been receiving media attention, particularly in a recent item in the *Los Angeles Times* – subscribers (free) can go to <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-priest26mar26,1,2174214.story>. However, according to a Los Angeles diocesan newsletter comment, the principle of mental reservation is not doctrine and has been used improperly by the media. See <http://www.the-tidings.com/2007/033007/timesreact.htm>.

*US Catholic* magazine: Author of *The Holy Longing* and former philosophy professor Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I. discusses polarity among Catholics. Fr. Rolheiser now serves as president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. Go to [http://uscatholic.claretians.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=12107&news\\_iv\\_ctrl=0&abbr=usc](http://uscatholic.claretians.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=12107&news_iv_ctrl=0&abbr=usc).

The unfolding tragedy of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church has placed a **spotlight on clergy** of other denominations. One such indication was noted in a recent Colorado newspaper article. Go to <http://www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070402/NEWS01/704020322/1002>.

A lay synod movement has held its first lay congress. Read about the experience of one Texas parish at <http://kanickers.blogspot.com/2007/03/lay-congress-recap.html>.

National Public Radio has excellent coverage of the recent **FutureChurch pilgrimage to Rome’s archaeological sites of early women leaders** at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9145466>. Also on NPR are links to NPR stories about Mary of Magdala and the FutureChurch 2006 Rome Pilgrimage at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5388608> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5342854>

The February 2007 post-synodal exhortation “Sacramentum Caritatis” from Pope Benedict XVI is at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20070222\\_sacramentum-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html). See an overview from Catholic News Service at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0701411.htm>.

Thank you to **Mike Nicholas, VOTF Australia**, for identifying an excellent article that considers two kinds of church men – Bernard Haring and Joseph Ratzinger. The item appears in the Canadian publication *Social Edge* at <http://www.thesocialedge.com/archives/tedschmidt/columns-jan2007.shtml>.

Note: The recent **bankruptcy filing by the Diocese of San Diego** is the fifth U.S. diocese (and the largest) to file bankruptcy after Portland, Ore., Spokane, Wash., Tucson, Ariz. and Davenport, Iowa.

**The Catholic Common Ground Initiative** newsletter "Initiative Report" is posted on the National Pastoral Life Center web site. It includes a summary by Dean Hoge of two

findings noted in his new book *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*. The findings he notes are about generational differences among Catholics and what laity see as the main problems in the Church. Dean Hoge is professor of sociology emeritus at The Catholic University of America. Go to <http://www.nplc.org/commonground/pdf/InitiativeReport-Mar2007.pdf> for the full text of the talk. Then subscribe to the quarterly eight-page newsletter by sending your name and postal mail address to [commonground@nplc.org](mailto:commonground@nplc.org).

**Delaware Online reports:**“ Navy Cmdr. Kenneth J. Whitwell took the stand Thursday in U.S. District Court and told a panel of six jurors what no Delaware jury has heard before: He told them how he was sexually abused by a Catholic priest as a student at Archmere Academy.” Survivors and survivor support advocates believe Whitwell’s testimony will encourage other survivors to come forward. See the full story at <http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070330/NEWS/703300351/1006/NEWS>.

Pewsitters.com is a new site worth a visit. Go to [www.pewsitters.com](http://www.pewsitters.com) and let us know what you think at [pthorp.ed@votf.org](mailto:pthorp.ed@votf.org).

## COMMENTARY

“Agency, Community and Spirituality” – Sr. Theresa Kane at VOTF Bridgeport CT

“Confession: The Making of a Sacrament” – Gaile Pohlhaus

QUOTE for our time: "As women we have heard the powerful message of our church addressing the dignity and reverence of all persons. As women we have pondered these words. Our contemplation leads us to state that the church in its struggle to be faithful to its call for reverence and dignity for all persons must respond by providing the possibility of women as persons being included in all ministries of the church." *Sr. Theresa Kane speaking to Pope John Paul II in October 1979 at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City. See Commentary for more.*

## Report to the Board of Trustees From the National Representative Council

### Sad News

I have received news that Frank Murray, Representative from Region 7, died on Palm Sunday. I talked with his wife, Alice, who is a former classmate of mine from graduate school. She said that Frank had been diagnosed with acute leukemia in February, had a bad fall last week and didn't recover. The funeral Mass will be tomorrow at 7:00 pm at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Menomonee Falls WI. Alice's address is N61

W15763 Skyline Drive, Menomonee Falls WI 53051.

### **Elections**

Elections for Representatives have been conducted in several regions in recent weeks. I have been informed of the following results.

Region 1: Donna Doucette, Ron DuBois, Pat Gomez, Janet Merchant, Steve Sheehan

Region 2: Dan Bartley and Sheila Peiffer: Ed Wilson previously elected

Region 3: Bud Bretschneider and Bill Culleton

Region 4: no results yet: two candidates including Rich Moriarty; Chuck Miller previously elected.

Region 5: Susan Vogt

Region 6: Ed Friedl; Kris Ward previously elected

Region 7: Janet Hauter as current sole candidate, no election yet: Frank Murray deceased

Region 8: Bob Schwiderski – previously elected

Region 9: David Biersmith to replace Bob Kaintz

Region 10: Lisa Kendzior – previously elected

Region 11: no word, Jim Jenkins and Hugh O'Regan possible candidates

Region 12: Gary Alan Spanovich to replace Linda Mains

Region 13: no candidates to date to replace Frank Douglas

Region 14: Rosa Maria Montenegro and Doug Roach – previously elected

### **Resolutions**

Two resolutions on Financial Accountability and one on Protecting Children have passed the NRC by wide margins after significant positive response from the members in the regions. The resolution from the Goal 2 committee has been widely discussed by the NRD and revised by the Committee. It will be voted on next week. The resolution of National/Local Balance has been discussed and has been sent to some of the larger affiliates for their comments. It requires much further discussion and perhaps revision. It will be on the agenda for the April meeting. [The full texts and voting tally for the passed resolutions, and the text for the upcoming vote, are here.]

#### *Remembering Frank Murray*

Frank Murray, representative to the VOTF National Council from Wisconsin, died on Palm Sunday. He had been diagnosed with leukemia only a short month before. Frank spent 30 years with the Maryknoll Fathers, serving mostly as a missionary in East Africa. When he resigned from Maryknoll he married Alice Haller who had herself been a Maryknoll Sister. They had no children. For many years Frank worked as a management consultant working with a variety of companies, many of them in third world countries. He was a lifelong activist, working to combat AIDS, third world poverty, the proliferation of land mines and of small arms, and the extortion of child soldiers. He joined VOTF because he recognized the failure of bishops to employ intelligent

management practices in dealing with sexual abuse and financial mismanagement in the Church. *Ron DuBois*

## COMMENTARY – A Report from VOTF Bridgeport CT

### Agency, Community and Spirituality

*[Sister Theresa Kane spoke at VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport on March 1, 2007. Her subject was a vision of Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is recapped below.]*

*This is the same Sister Theresa Kane who made front-page news twenty-eight years ago. At St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City on October 1979 Sr. Theresa Kane addressed Pope John Paul II on behalf of women in the Catholic Church. Her brief remarks were a surprise to the Pope and garnered international attention. Her statement is the Quote for our time in this issue: "As women we have heard the powerful message of our church addressing the dignity and reverence of all persons. As women we have pondered these words. Our contemplation leads us to state that the church in its struggle to be faithful to its call for reverence and dignity for all persons must respond by providing the possibility of women as persons being included in all ministries of the church."*

*Sr. Theresa never sought the limelight and has spent the last quarter century as a Sister of Mercy in a variety of ministries including the presidency of her order. For a little more information about Sr. Theresa, go to [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1141/is\\_39\\_36/ai\\_65774931](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_39_36/ai_65774931).]*

Sister hailed VOTF as a new movement which, along with other organizations, has responded to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit and has created a new consciousness of what it means to be Church.

In her talk, "A Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Our Church as a Community of Equals and a Community of Disciples," Sister emphasized the need for all of us to keep struggling to create this new community whose roots are in the tradition of the early Church.

Three qualities essential to this new vision are: agency, community, and spirituality. Agency, Sister explained, entails the recognition of all members as equal directors of their own lives. At the present time, women are not given the opportunity to be agents of change within the Church. Sister alluded to Rev. Robert Drinan's last article in the *National Catholic Reporter* in which he expressed the need for women to be equal partners with men in the shaping of the Church of our time.

In order to achieve community, the second quality needed for change, we need to

confront the injustice that excludes women and thus prevents true community in our Church. When our institution does not support community, God's very own design, it must be reformed.

Finally, the quality of spirituality, holiness of life, needs to be personal and communal. Questions we might ask ourselves are: How do I develop my spirituality? And, Is my religion helping my spirituality? We need to look at our image of God, an image we find helpful to the development of our spirituality.

At the conclusion of her talk, Sister Theresa suggested we look to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who was a strong woman praying her beautiful prayer, the "Magnificat," in which she spoke of God being revealed through her. We, like Mary, need to be a people of vision.

Sister asked us to consider these questions: What is my vision?, What would I like to do to better our world?, and What would I like to do for myself? In reflecting on these questions all of us can contribute to a new vision for our Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that, hopefully, will become a community of equals and a community of disciples.

## **CONFESSION: The Making of a Sacrament**

*Gaile Pohlhaus*

St. Joseph did not build the first confessional. As a matter of fact it was only in 1614 that a screen was mandated between the penitent and the confessor. The reason for this was twofold: 1) to ensure anonymity for the sinner and 2) to protect the sinner from predatory priests. Perhaps the screen shouldn't have been replaced by reconciliation rooms. But reconciliation rooms were supposed to be replicating what the sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) was like originally. Actually this sacrament was a long time developing.

Certainly we can find instances in the Gospels where Jesus forgave sins, for example, Matthew 9:1-3; Luke 7:47-48; and John 5:13-15. The earliest Christian communities saw Baptism as the means of salvation, so much so, that even until the middle of the fourth century some men put off Baptism so that they could be baptized on their death beds, thus ensuring the forgiveness of all sins and immediate entrance into heaven. Infant baptism apparently became the normal thing to do after Constantine "converted" Europe to Christianity and probably became widespread as late as the fifth century. The only problem was that more and more babies were being baptized and people needed to be forgiven post-baptismal sins for which they were truly sorry. Eucharist was received weekly and catechumens and penitents (people who had committed the serious sins of murder, adultery, or apostasy) were expected to leave mass after the liturgy of the word. You could only receive forgiveness for a serious sin once after baptism and this evidently remains in place until the seventh century. For less serious sins fasting, alms giving, and prayer would suffice for forgiveness. For penitents to be received back into the Church there had to be public penance and a ceremony of reconciliation. This rehabilitation was

performed by the local bishop since the serious sin not only affected the penitent's relationship with God but their relationship with the local church.

A new tradition was starting to grow in the west however (remember at that time west meant Ireland.) At sometime in the fifth century people who wanted to be forgiven for sins of any nature would consult a local monastery. As these monks then went eastwardly they carried this tradition with them. More importantly they carried lists of sins and their appropriate penances. Perhaps this was due to no nearby local bishops and perhaps also people wanted to be more private. Some suggest that Christians wanted to participate in a Lenten practice. In any case these "Irish penitentials" were carried into the body of the Roman church. This type of penance became known as "tariff" penance. By the end of the ninth century this practice became known as "Confession." For some period of time the forgiveness was given by any holy person (usually a monk, nun, or hermit) but eventually became the duty of an ordained priest. Unfortunately this practice became one of individuation rather a communal rite and responsibility. Could it be that the practice of individual confession helped lead us into a practice of Christianity for the person rather than for the reign of God?

Things continued to go down hill. With a list of sins, the tariff (payment) for forgiveness, and the theology that Christ paid back God for our sins, the next step to literally pay someone else to do the tariff is an easy one. Thus indulgences get preached and offered. This eventually leads to the reformation and the Council of Trent. The transition starts with Lateran Council IV (1215) which puts the emphasis on confession and absolution and adds the obligation of confessing serious sins (a list that was originally four) at least once a year and receiving Eucharist during the "Easter Time." This is the first time that the Church officially recognized Penance as a sacrament. The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) in its 14th session issued 15 decrees which taught that a valid confession consisted of listing all one's sins, the number of times one committed them, and the circumstances. St. Charles Borromeo is credited with instituting the screen between the penitent and confessor.

By the end of the nineteenth century theologians were exploring the liturgical roots of Christianity. By the time of Vatican II it became apparent to the bishops that the communal dimensions of the sacraments had all but disappeared. They called (in paragraph 72 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, promulgated on December 4, 1963) for the rite and formulas for the sacrament of penance to be revised so that they more clearly express both the nature and effect of the sacrament. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1972 issued the document that called for three general forms of the sacrament which is now called Reconciliation. The third form is rarely used (general absolution for all in attendance) although it is the most communal. The first and second forms (individual confession with the option of face-to-face and a general penitential rite with the opportunity for individual meeting with a priest for absolution) are the forms most usually found in North American parishes, although participation by the faithful is very low. The reasons for this will be explored in another column.

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