

## ***IN THE VINEYARD- AUGUST 28, 2008***

### **NATIONAL News**

#### **News from Chicago**

#### **Voice of the Faithful Demands Cardinal George's Resignation**

Last week, VOTF released a statement calling for Cardinal George to resign and for authorities to begin a criminal investigation into the actions of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

“The recently revealed deposition by Cardinal Francis George is a clear indictment of his pastoring skills and his inability to lead the people of Chicago. His repeated failures in both the Bennett and McCormack cases indicate a trend to disregard advice from outside clerical circles and continue to follow precedents of deceit, cover-ups and secrecy (imbedded in the clerical culture) in lieu of protecting innocent children from irreparable harm.”

For the entire press release:

<http://www.votf.org/Press/pressrelease/081808.html>

For more coverage, click here

#### **We Want Your Opinion!**

VOTF is engaged in a strategic planning process and we're asking all members for feedback. In particular, we need to know from our membership what they perceive to be our greatest current strengths and weaknesses. As we plan for a focused future to reach the goals we set for ourselves, we need members to define what might be future opportunities for the organization as well as threats that may be obstacles for us.

All members from the Board of Trustees, Officers, the National Rep Council and Working Group have been polled. Now it's the members turn. We urge every member to give us your input. Only through honest, transparent communication can we grow and become stronger. The online survey will gather your information until Monday, September 15. We will analyze the data provided and report back to all members in late Fall.

Thank you in advance for your ideas,  
The National Officers

To take the survey: VOTF FULL MEMBERSHIP STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY

#### **From the National Office: New Faces**

VOTF welcomes Jessica Lillie as PR Director for the national office. Ms. Lillie most recently worked as director of public relations and fundraising for a non-profit agency near Chicago. She comes to VOTF with a background in broadcast journalism and several years experience writing and producing television news shows.

"We are pleased to add Jessica's talents to our staff, and we look forward to the new opportunities her knowledge of today's technologies will provide," said Donna B. Doucette, Executive Director of VOTF. "Jessica is replacing long-time VOTF member, John Moynihan, who served the organization for almost three years, and we thank John for his hard work."

Ms. Lillie has a degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism. She has also studied journalism and public relations at universities in Australia and Massachusetts.

VOTF also welcomes to our national office Brian Roylance, who as our new Office Manager will be manning the telephones, keeping our inventory steady, our office machines running, generating reports and generally helping things work smoothly. If you recognize that last name, yes, Brian already has a history with VOTF. His mother Margaret is a long-time member and the chair of our national Structural Change Working Group.

Say hello to Brian and to Jessica the next time you drop in or call!

## **LETTER to the Editor**

In response to VOTF's request for Cardinal George's resignation, Ruth Bertels, editor of the website, Taking Five, urges VOTF members and all Catholics to act:

"Jesus acted, even when he was exhausted, distracted, discouraged. Is he saying to us today, "Oh, ye of little faith! Why do you doubt your power for good? My grace is sufficient for you! Where is your faith? Your love for Me? Your love for my sheep, your brothers and sisters?"

To read Ruth's letter in its entirety, please click on the following link:

Catholic Apathy: Can, Should, Must We Act?

"Feed my lambs," Jesus invited his disciples, and you and me. We wouldn't walk by a starving child without picking her up, giving her food and finding her a safe place, would we?

Yet, at times of deep sorrow, and lack of leadership, adult Catholics can, and often do, act like bewildered children, unable to think clearly or to act with courage, even unable to seek out others who can lend support.

Years go, we learned about culpable and inculpable responsibility. If we have the use of reason, and wonder about a certain situation, we are obliged in conscience to study the situation, and to conclude whether or not we need to act to bring about a just result to a problem. Doing nothing is not an option for a Christian, including Catholic Christians.

Sitting on our hands is not an option. We must reach out to others to talk over the situation, write a letter, pick up the phone. Just saying, "I'll pray over it" isn't enough. Praying is wonderful, but we must act. Jesus acted, even when he was exhausted, distracted, discouraged. Is he saying to

us today, "Oh, ye of little faith! Why do you doubt your power for good? My grace is sufficient for you! Where is your faith? Your love for Me? Your love for my sheep, your brothers and sisters?"

Look around. Listen. What do you hear? What do you see?" Cries of confusion and hurt from people who don't know what to do, where to turn, with regard to asking Cardinal George to resign.

Is there any nourishment flowing from Holy Name Cathedral today? Or is there only confusion, and deep sadness, with no sense of direction? You can do something. You. And You. And You.

Gather some friends. Put on the coffee pot. Pass around the pencils and papers. Brainstorm the situation. Then, if you see the only just action is to ask the Cardinal to resign, ask: Should we take an ad out in a paper? Are we willing to pay the price? No dinners out for a month. No stage show. No movies. Whatever it takes. Write letters to the editors...one by one or from the group. Together, we can build a new Church. Let's get to work.

Ruth Bertels

## **PRIEST Support Working Group News**

VOTF'S Providence Convention "Disciples in Action" provided an occasion for honoring selected clergy with a "Priest of Integrity" award for their noted courage and compassion in their ministry. We know that there are many untold stories of priests doing heroic service in their communities, but it is our hope that highlighting the ones that we have come to know about gives us examples to follow and hope in the unseen goodness that abounds.

There were many priests nominated from across the country, and although a few were singled out at the convention, there were ten more who also deserve our appreciation and support. In the upcoming editions of *In the Vineyard*, we will recognize each of these priests of integrity.

### **Fr. Pat Brennan – a Priest of Integrity**

Fr. Pat Brennan is pastor of Holy Family Catholic Community in Inverness, IL. He has long been recognized as a priest who lives the faith he preaches. Holy Family Parish was charged with the challenge to be an experimental parish with liturgies, music and homilies melding contemporary theology with psychology and the headlines. Fr. Pat's gifts are evident in his ability to empower the laity to question, discern and act courageously and with compassion according to their informed consciences. Fr. Pat's homilies resonate with parishioners who often feel that the message was customized specifically for them. He is well known for his "reality-based" preaching and servant leadership.

To read more about Father Pat Brennan:

Author of fourteen books, Fr. Brennan's most recent, *The Mission Driven Parish* (2007), received a third place award from the Catholic Press Association of the U.S. and Canada in the

category of pastoral ministry.

Fr. Pat is also included in Paul Wilkes *Best Practices from America's Best Churches* (2003) and *Excellent Catholic Parishes: The Guide to Best Places and Best Practices* (2001). He is quoted as saying, "Evangelization, I have found, is what draws people to church. It might be done by word of mouth, the example of members, or advertising. The warmth of the congregation, the quality of the liturgy, music or art are what keep them coming. And, very importantly, preaching."

The people of Holy Family Catholic Community are in need of our prayers as they painfully struggle along with Fr. Pat with his eventual departure. He faces leaving the community following two extensions as pastor while a large addition has been built, the Center for Families and Youth. The community wrestles with the competing reality of compliance with Cardinal George's directive of moving Fr. Pat despite a request by his parishioners to keep him through retirement.

## EVENTS

### Save the Date

If you haven't heard **Francine Cardman** speak since the 2002 convention and/or if your faith these days needs a little refreshing, this presentation is for you. On Thursday, October 2, 2008, at 7 pm, Francine Cardman will deliver a lecture on "Meeting Jesus: Christ in Tradition and Traditions." The free lecture will take place in Peterson Hall #024 (on the Brighton campus). To register, contact [STMCE@BC.EDU](mailto:STMCE@BC.EDU) or call 617-552-6501 or 800-487-1167.

"Meeting Jesus: Christ in Tradition and Traditions" will focus on "the earliest Christians, we meet Jesus Christ on the way, in the world, through the relationships and communities that are the contexts of our lives. These experiences are immediate and particular but are also part of larger contexts and communities that extend across cultures and across centuries. This wide and deeply textured network of Christian faith offers multiple, rich traditions of practice and reflection within which we may encounter Jesus Christ and continue to hand on the Tradition of God's saving love. This presentation will sketch the contours of this broad terrain and explore examples of its diverse possibilities and perspectives." *Submitted by P.L. Thorp*

*Francine Cardman is Associate Professor of Historical Theology and Church History, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry Co-sponsored by the Church in the 21st Century Center and STM.*

### Walk Across Oregon! (Support for Survivors)

**Why?** We want to inspire people across Oregon to work to prevent the sexual abuse of children and to care for survivors of abuse. Our ideas include (1) providing private support, group support and community support for survivors of child sex abuse ([www.compassionategathering.org](http://www.compassionategathering.org)); and (2) building support for eliminating the statute of limitations on prosecuting child sex abuse.

**Where?** We will start in Ashland , Oregon , on September 1, 2008, and end in Portland tentatively on September 29, 2008.

**Who?** We will be wearing neon yellow t-shirts that say “Stop Child Sex Abuse” on the front and “Walk Across Oregon” on the back. We include survivors of childhood sex abuse and clergy abuse, family members of survivors, and supporters from the community. All survivors and supporters are welcome to join us at any point in the walk.

**For more information**, and for details on the walk’s route, contact Compassionate Gathering ([www.compassionategathering.org](http://www.compassionategathering.org)), **Virginia Jones** (childhood sex abuse and rape survivor and spokeswoman for the Walk Across Oregon, co-founder of Compassionate Gathering), cell:503-866-6163, e-mail: [compassion500@aol.com](mailto:compassion500@aol.com).

## **SITE-Seeing**

In a recent issue of *Foreign Policy Magazine*, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson was asked what the Pope should do to resolve the sexual abuse crisis. He answered:

I will know the Catholic Church is truly serious when it places obligatory celibacy on the table for discussion. I don’t believe the celibacy requirement is the sole cause of abuse, but it has become a litmus test.

The problem is not celibacy, but obligatory celibacy. Mother Teresa freely chose a celibate life because it was the only way she could do what she felt called to do, what she wanted to do. By making it obligatory, you create numerous priests, who want to be good priests, but who are living an unwanted and unaccepted celibacy. Unwanted celibacy can contribute to unhealthy psychology, such as severe depression. It can contribute to unhealthy ideas—for example, misogyny. It can contribute to unhealthy living conditions, including loneliness and lack of support. When these three things come together, you have the circumstances in which sexual abuse can arise.

To read the article in its entirety:

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4445](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4445)

## **News from VERMONT**

Father Tom Doyle testified in the recent Vermont sexual abuse case. To read about the case and Father Doyle’s testimony, click on

<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080819/NEWS02/808190355/1003/NEWS02>

## BOOK Review

**Voice of Renewal/Lay Education Working Group** has an annotated bibliography and book summaries available on the VOTF website. Anne Southwood, co-chair of Voice of Renewal/Lay Education Working Group reviewed God's Problem by Bart D. Ehrman, 2008 (Harper One, NY) for Vineyard readers this month.

After driving through a scary thunder and windstorm, anticipating suffering from the displacement of my heavy vehicle by a sudden evil strike, the flyleaf of this book made it easy to pick from my pile to review. The author, a younger but noted biblical scholar and pastor, expert on the early Church and life of Jesus, states his goal as helping people examine the reality of suffering in their lived experience in the real world. He encourages us to face suffering.

To read the rest of Anne's review:

Bart Ehrman is author of *New York Times* bestseller Misquoting Jesus. This new book – God's Problem – is also written simply and directly for a broad audience. It is not too heavy to take to the beach and easily understandable to anyone with basic scriptural knowledge. It would also be helpful to anyone wanting to improve understanding of the flow of scripture amid different approaches to understanding relationship to God.

The relational simplicity of God's Problem is only available to someone who has devoted his life to religious studies and to religious expression. As a young baseball player taken out of the game for a summer with a debilitating virus, Ehrman used the natural agility and courage of a second baseman to survive. He discovered another natural ability and love - research. A child of religious parents, his skills and environment brought him to a Protestant seminary. He is also a seeker with broad experience. He has moved through different religious experiences from Episcopalianism to Evangelical to Baptist. He has also taught at UNC, Rutgers and Princeton.

Here comes that curve ball. This one is different. In this book our expert notes the reality of the absence rather than the presence of the God he has framed his entire life around. He has become an agnostic. What is God's problem?

If the bible is the inspired word of God, why can't our expert author rely on it anymore to help him understand the suffering of his friends, victims of the Khmer Rouge, or deal with his sense of insult that he lives a prime life amid the evil of children dying of starvation. He has suffered a great loss and is in the same desert as Mother Teresa. A poignant paragraph about his inability to relate to the joy of his wife at a Christmas Eve liturgy says it all.

Ehrman is relevant, however. The recent Pew Research Study indicates surging changes in religious expression in America and also defection from religious expression, especially among the young. The young appreciate truth. This author offers his skills and a sense that you are not alone as he continues to try to relate to students and seekers. This is far from an answer book, but Ehrman walks with the seeker offering an objective guidebook through biblical literature on suffering. Interestingly, his personal choice of a fallback position in this agnostic period is also

biblical - Ecclesiastes and his continuing sense of pastoral responsibility, love life, do good - back to his roots directives will carry him through.

## **Commentary**

### **John Paul I Can Lead Us Home**

By Ruth Bertels

Whenever we Catholics suffer the heartache of recognizing the difference between the way things are and the way they ought to be in this Church of ours, we turn to the Lord, and to our favorite saints. Today, let us take a long, loving look at Pope John Paul I, (born Albino Luciani). He has so much to teach us, and to remind us that high holiness and service to God's people are possible, even in the highest office of the Church.

I knew he'd be there, of course, between the covers of Pontiff, by Thomas and Morgan-Watts, and In God's Name, by David Yallop; I just didn't know there would be that much to him – all that genuine Christianity in the open for the world to see. Among the purple and gold, the Michaelangelos and Raphaels, the politicians and financial wizards. Right on the throne of Peter.

John Paul I had been nurtured in poverty, and never forgot what that was like. As he moved from being an unknown cleric to becoming bishop of Vittorio Veneto, he gently refused all gifts with these words: "I came without five lire. I want to leave without five lire."

An incident in Vittorio Veneto shows his attitude toward clerics and civil law. It is especially appropriate for our inspiration, considering the scandals by which our people are surrounded these sad days.

Two priests had become involved in a financial scandal, resulting in the loss of money to small savers. Luciani called his four-hundred priests together, told them the entire story and promised the two billion lire would be returned.

Most agreed with him. Others felt he was too moral about the matter. The property speculator who had involved the two priests committed suicide before his trial. One of the priests served a one-year prison term, and the other was acquitted. (In God's Name)

If Luciani was this sensitive about financial matters, one cannot help but wonder what he would have done if faced with the sexual abuses in our country today. There wouldn't have been any cover-ups, for sure. How many thousands of children he would have saved, and in the process, no doubt his direct, immediate actions would have avoided the vengeful lawsuits with which we are coping daily.

Prior to his installation, the pope was well aware of the corruption within the Vatican Bank, due to the machinations of Bishop Paul Marcinkus and Roberto Calvi, and he was determined both to replace Marcinkus and to restore the integrity of the Vatican Bank, no matter what the cost in money and reputation. Calvi was involved in the ongoing theft of \$1 billion, which Luciani

would have completely exposed.

David Yallop concludes his book by telling us of Pope John Paul I's dream for the Church: By the evening of September 28, 1978, he had taken the first steps toward making that dream come true, by compiling a list of reforms to be instigated immediately, but it was not to be. Some time during the night of September 28, his life came to an end, but not his dream.

Today, he would remind us that the greatest scandal of all is in ignoring its presence, in the hope that it will just go away. Let us pray for his vision and courage and love to heal the terrible wounds perpetrated on our abused children, and throughout our suffering Church. Amen.