

## *December 8 In the Vineyard*

### **National News**

#### **Strategic Plan Unveiled**

VOTF's work has just begun, and for those who are called to participate in the growth of our Church, to console survivors and protect children, to preserve and protect our faith and to speak for those who cannot, this is your opportunity to act.

In the last two issues of *In the Vineyard* we described how we used the feedback received from our members to create VOTF's new strategic plan. In this issue, we provide a link to the entire plan and ask you to sign on.

The plan incorporates a revised organizational model with the following five main platforms:

- Local/Diocese level action;
- Protection of Children and Support of Survivors;
- Universal Church Reform;
- Partnerships and Networking; and,
- Spiritual and Communal Growth.

The platforms allow us to focus the action for our three goals in ways that begin transforming the Church so that we can attain our Mission: To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church.

We hope that as you read this final document, you will see a particular area (or more than one!) that you will feel compelled to sign on and support. We need your support for VOTF to move forward and cause the change we want to see in our church.

### **News from the Working Groups**

#### **Father Louis Stasker, A Priest of Integrity**

*Submitted by Svea Fraser*

The Priest Support Working Group honors selected clergy with a "Priest of Integrity" award for their noted courage and compassion in their ministry. But there are many untold stories of priests doing heroic service in their communities. We hope that highlighting the ones we have come to know will give us examples to follow and to build hope in the often-unseen goodness that abounds.

The Grand Rapid, Michigan, affiliate of VOTF proposed Fr. Lou Stasker for recognition as a pastor and priest of integrity. Among his many roles, he is pastor of one of the diocese's largest parishes, St. Robert of Newminster Church in Ada, MI, and he is pastor and president of Catholic Secondary Schools in Grand Rapids (Catholic Central High School and West Catholic High School).

To read more on Father Stasker

In 2002, Fr. Lou responded positively to the request by the new affiliate of VOTF to support its formation. He welcomed the opportunity and opened the doors for meetings and speakers. Some of those speakers included Gaile Pohlhaus, Fr. Richard McBrien, Fr. Francis Sullivan, SJ., Eugene Kennedy, Fr. Thomas Doyle, OP, Fr. Donald Cozzens as well as himself. He often hosted those from out of town in his own home.

Fr. Lou is noted for his compassion and prayerfulness. In reaching out to survivors of abuse, he has been able to help heal some of the indelible wounds from childhood. His sensitivity to survivor issues is due in no small part to the fact that he has an adopted son who was abused by both of his biological parents.

With his support, the Grand Rapid affiliate joined with others to initiate Protecting Michigan's Children in order to change the laws regarding statutes of limitations for child abuse.

In the words of Rosemary Murphy and Larry Mulligan, "Fr. Lou is a treasure to St. Robert of Newminister, our high schools, our VOTF affiliate and our entire diocese. He is available to all who call on him, young and old, rich and poor, conservative and liberal. His door is always open. We pray he will continue to pastor us for many years to come. He is a model of what a priest of integrity should be."

### **Prayerful Voice**

*Submitted by Gaile M. Pohlhaus, PhD*

As the nights grow longer and darker  
Help us to cherish all children  
And protect them  
As Mary and Joseph  
Protected the child Jesus.

### **Thinking About Christmas Shopping?**

If you plan to do any online shopping at Amazon.com, please go to the VOTF website first and access Amazon through VOTF. Amazon.com will then donate a small percentage of whatever you buy to VOTF. You won't be charged any extra and VOTF will be able to raise some money! Please follow the link: <http://www.votf.org/amazon/>

As always, thank you for your support – both spiritual and financial!

## **Affiliate News**

### **Dan Bartley Speaks at Wellesley Affiliate on New Strategic Plan**

*Submitted by Anne Southwood*

From the Cape Cod Canal to near the New Hampshire border, VOTF stalwarts of the Boston diocese came to Wellesley on December 3 to hear VOTF president, Dan Bartley. VOTF president for less than a year, Bartley and his confidence in our membership and the new Strategic Plan drew approving enthusiasm and also monetary pledges in support of the plan.

"We must move forward decisively," he said, explaining the Plan as a "remodel" for focus. "This plan will first provide tools," he said. To read more about Dan Bartley's meeting in Wellesley,

### **Bartley Presents Plan to Wellesley Affiliate**

"We have a big talented membership," he said, noting a problem in defining our "brand." He named inefficient organizational structure as the root cause of our inability to facilitate meaningful change.

After doing a realistic analysis of success in reaching objectives, the officers created an execution-model based on the analysis. Officers, in servant-leadership mode, will each head a "platform," which will allow members to plug into the model based on their own passions and abilities. Bartley stressed the guiding principles in developing the Strategic Plan: consistency with VOTF mission, goals, identity statement, and core values; reasonable expectation that it could be executed within our resources; capacity to energize members and be easy to understand.

The Plan has five designated action-platforms. A leadership team is now being recruited for each platform, and most people asked to serve have agreed. These are "people who feel this is what they are called to do," said Bartley. This core will recruit others around the country in a connected but centered approach to action.

The platform bases are: diocese/local action, reform to protect children/support survivors, universal Church reform, networking (to include the American Catholic Council initiative), and spiritual/communal growth. Bartley said that a national synergy can result from coordination between platform groups as well as outreach to other reform groups and to pathways in existing Church structure.

There was a strong presence of open communication and connection to the Plan presentation and in audience questions and comments. Bartley also moves fast. When Andrew Genovese spoke as a young Catholic, he motioned to Donna Doucette, VOTF's Executive Director, to sign him up. Andrew, naming Newman Clubs as very conservative, said VOTF needs to "brand" itself as not being against the Church. Ron Dubois followed, recognizing the communication genius of the young. He suggested creation of a website for each platform. Kathleen Cerruti, affiliate leader from the MA South Shore later echoed this sentiment. "Don't make fun of blogs, you have to build interactive communication" she said. People feel involved when they have input, she explained. She had said that people can feel disconnected from national action.

At the conclusion, comments by Pat Gomez and Ted Breau summarized reaction to the plan. "The enthusiasm demonstrated by Dan is contagious," said Pat. Ted added that he wanted to commend Dan and the officers for the new platform approach. "It will invigorate VOTF," said Ted with certainty.

The Metrowest Daily News also had a write up of the meeting:  
<http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/x1315230936/Voice-of-the-Faithful-hopes-to-refocus-its-efforts>

### **NY VOTF Affiliate Discusses Bourgeois Controversy and Formation of Conscience**

The New York affiliate of Voice of the Faithful held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, December 1, 2008, at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola at 980 Park Avenue in Manhattan. The meeting was devoted to a discussion of the controversy surrounding Fr. Roy Bourgeois, who is under a threat of excommunication for his participation in a ceremony in which women were ordained as priests. Following is a summary of the two-hour discussion on this issue and the broader question of how our Catholic Church deals with dissent among the faithful. The discussion was wide ranging and touched on the formation of conscience and how we, as members of VOTF are called to act.

### **Conscience in Conflict with the Church: The Case of Fr. Roy Bourgeois**

After an opening prayer, the group discussed the Bourgeois controversy as reported in the *National Catholic Reporter*, and shared reflections on Fr. Bourgeois and his work as a Maryknoll priest over the past 18 years organizing the annual protest at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. The School of the Americas, since renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, has been a center for the U.S. Army training of military officers from numerous Latin American countries. It is alleged that this course of training has included counter-insurgency training and the use of torture techniques. Each year, several thousand protesters have gathered outside the gates of Fort Benning in late November to protest the training program, and to reiterate calls for the closing of the training center. Fr. Bourgeois has been a catalyst for this annual demonstration. Over the past several years, representatives from St. Ignatius parish have traveled to Georgia to participate in the demonstrations. The current controversy involving Fr. Bourgeois is not directly related to these annual demonstrations, except insofar as Fr. Bourgeois has demonstrated himself to be a tireless advocate for justice and peace over the course of nearly two decades.

The immediate cause of the current controversy was Fr. Bourgeois' decision to participate in an ordination ceremony held in August for Janice Sevre-Duszynska, who according to NCR was "the sixth U.S. woman ordained this year as a part of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests movement" and is "a longtime peace activist who was once arrested for performing civil disobedience at Fort Benning, and a longtime proponent of women's ordination" (NCR, 11.28.08, p. 10). According to reports, Fr. Bourgeois participated in the liturgy that accompanied the ordination ceremony, and preached a homily. Bourgeois was notified on Oct. 21 that he had 30 days in which to recant his position in support of the ordination of women or be excommunicated from the Catholic Church.

Fr. Bourgeois Responds to the Threat of Excommunication

The VOTF NY group began the discussion by reading the complete text of Fr. Bourgeois' letter of response to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, as follows:

Rev. Roy Bourgeois, M.M.  
PO Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903  
November 7, 2008

TO THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, THE VATICAN

I was very saddened by your letter dated October 21, 2008, giving me 30 days to recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church, or I will be excommunicated.

I have been a Catholic priest for 36 years and have a deep love for my Church and ministry.

When I was a young man in the military, I felt God was calling me to the priesthood. I entered Maryknoll and was ordained in 1972.

Over the years I have met a number of women in our Church who, like me, feel called by God to the priesthood. You, our Church leaders at the Vatican, tell us that women cannot be ordained.

With all due respect, I believe our Catholic Church's teaching on this issue is wrong and does not stand up to scrutiny. A 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission supports the research of Scripture scholars, canon lawyers and many faithful Catholics who have studied and pondered the Scriptures and have concluded that there is no justification in the Bible for excluding women from the priesthood.

As people of faith, we profess that the invitation to the ministry of priesthood comes from God. We profess that God is the Source of life and created men and women of equal stature and dignity. The current Catholic Church doctrine on the ordination of women implies our loving and all-powerful God, Creator of heaven and earth, somehow cannot empower a woman to be a priest.

Women in our Church are telling us that God is calling them to the priesthood. Who are we, as men, to say to women, "Our call is valid, but yours is not." Who are we to tamper with God's call?

Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard or how long we may try to justify discrimination, in the end, it is always immoral.

Hundreds of Catholic churches in the U.S. are closing because of a shortage of priests. Yet there are hundreds of committed and prophetic women telling us that God is calling them to serve our Church as priests.

If we are to have a vibrant, healthy Church rooted in the teachings of our Savior, we need the faith, wisdom, experience, compassion and courage of women in the priesthood.

Conscience is very sacred. Conscience gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing. Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter, a humble Austrian farmer, husband and father of four young children, to refuse to join Hitler's army, which led to his execution. Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say she could no longer sit in the back of the bus. Conscience is what compels women in our Church to say they cannot be silent and deny their call from God to the priesthood. Conscience is what compelled my dear mother and father, now 95, to always strive to do the right things as faithful Catholics raising four children. And after much prayer, reflection and discernment, it is my conscience that compels me to do the right thing. I cannot recant my belief and public statements that support the ordination of women in our Church.

Working and struggling for peace and justice are an integral part of our faith. For this reason, I speak out against the war in Iraq. And for the last eighteen years, I have been speaking out against the atrocities and suffering caused by the School of the Americas (SOA). Eight years ago, while in Rome for a conference on peace and justice, I was invited to speak about the SOA on Vatican Radio. During the interview, I stated that I could not address the injustice of the SOA and remain silent about injustice in my Church. I ended the interview by saying, "There will never be justice in the Catholic Church until women can be ordained." I remain committed to this belief today.

Having an all male clergy implies that men are worthy to be Catholic priests, but women are not.

According to *USA TODAY* (Feb. 28, 2008), in the United States alone nearly 5,000 Catholic priests have sexually abused more than 12,000 children. Many bishops, aware of the abuse, remained silent. These priests and bishops were not excommunicated. Yet the women in our Church who are called by God and are ordained to serve God's people, and the priests and bishops who support them are excommunicated.

Silence is the voice of complicity. Therefore, I call on all Catholics, fellow priests, bishops, Pope Benedict XVI and all Church leaders at the Vatican, to speak loudly on this grave injustice of excluding women from the priesthood.

Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was assassinated because of his defense of the oppressed. He said, "Let those who have a voice, speak out for the voiceless."

Our loving God has given us a voice. Let us speak clearly and boldly and walk in solidarity as Jesus would, with the women in our Church who are being called by God to the priesthood.

In Peace and Justice,  
Rev. Roy Bourgeois, M.M.

PO Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903

*Blog Entry by James Martin, S.J.*

The group also noted a recent blog post dated Nov. 15 by James Martin, S.J., an associate editor of *America* magazine and a noted Catholic author (*My Lives of the Saints*). Fr. Martin analyzed the various canon law regulations pertaining to Bourgeois' actions:

Fr. Roy Bourgeois, MM, the Maryknoll priest who has been threatened with excommunication for his participation at an ordination rite for women, will travel to the Vatican to appeal his decision, AP is reporting, "with a contingent of fellow priests and a bishop." Despite earlier reports, Fr. Frederico Lombardi, SJ, the Vatican spokesman, said that he did not know of the existence of a letter to Lombardi detailing the sanction. Lombardi noted that the excommunication would be "automatic," in other words, a "latae sententiae" excommunication, effective when the offense is committed. (The person, in a sense, excommunicates himself or herself.)

The canon applied in this case has not been announced. It may be Canon 1364, which includes the "latae sententiae" excommunication: "§1 An apostate from the faith, a heretic or a schismatic incurs a latae sententiae excommunication, without prejudice to the provision of can. 194 §1, n. 2; a cleric, moreover, may be punished with the penalties mentioned in can. 1336 §1, nn. 1, 2 and 3. §2 If a longstanding contempt or the gravity of scandal calls for it, other penalties may be added, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state. "

Another canon that may apply is this 1365: "One who is guilty of prohibited participation in religious rites is to be punished with a just penalty." However, this only indicates a "just penalty." Excommunication, which forbids the reception of the sacraments (or, for the priest, their celebration) is the church's ultimate penalty against its members.

Fr. Bourgeois, a dedicated apostle of social justice, and champion of the poor, has offered the church a valuable ministry in his tireless work against the School of the Americas. Ironically, within days of the announcement of the Vatican censure, news came that the case against the soldiers, who murdered six Jesuits and their companions in El Salvador in 1989, might be brought before a court in Spain. (That court would try those accused of crimes against humanity.) Those soldiers were trained at the School of the Americas. In other words, the justice for which Fr. Bourgeois and his friends had fought seems within reach. The timing is notable.

Fr. Bourgeois was following his conscience, he said, in his participation at the ordination rite, though it was clearly against the church's teaching on women's ordination. In its document "Dignitatis Humanae," the Second Vatican Council wrote, "On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from

acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious." The Catechism of the Catholic church, quoting from Vatican II's "Gaudium et Spes," notes, "Conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths" (1795).

At the same time, Fr. Bourgeois must have known what the response from the church would entail: it is very clearly spelled out in canon law. (All priests by the way take courses in canon law as part of their training.) By participating in that rite--particularly in the laying on of hands, one of the main symbols of ordination in the Catholic church--that was contrary to church teaching about women's ordination, Fr. Bourgeois must have known that his actions would have some serious consequences.

Fr. Bourgeois is impelled to follow his conscience; the Vatican is impelled to enforce canon law. The collision course was inevitable.

One reflection: The ordination rite in which Fr. Bourgeois participated occurred in August. That means that within three months, the excommunication had been communicated from the Vatican to Fr. Bourgeois. In the eyes of the Vatican, his actions represented a grave offense that required swift action and a severe penalty.

Would that the church had acted with equal swiftness against sexually abusive priests. Would that bishops who had moved abusive priests from parish to parish were met with the same severity of justice.

Were their offenses of lesser "gravity"? Did they cause lesser "scandal"?

[http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog\\_id=2&id=A0EB46C8-1321-AEAA-D3AD45EB48BD2597](http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&id=A0EB46C8-1321-AEAA-D3AD45EB48BD2597)

### *VOTF's Response to the Vatican Threat of Excommunication*

VOTF National had objected to the threat with a strongly worded statement in a letter to the Vatican authorities. A VOTF press release accompanying the statement read in part:

#### VOTF Calls the Threat of Excommunication Against Fr. Bourgeois the True Scandal

November 24, 2008 – Boston – As the deadline for Fr. Roy Bourgeois' excommunication is upon us, Voice of the Faithful calls on the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to take a second look at the harshness of its threat to excommunicate Fr. Roy Bourgeois within 30 days of his recent letter explaining his decision, made in good conscience, to support the ordination of women.

Having served the Church his for 36 years as a Maryknoll priest, Fr. Bourgeois receives precisely thirty (30) days -- not even one day for each year of service -- to recant his position, or be expelled from the Church he so clearly loves. How scandalous that the Catholic Church can move so rapidly when its authority is challenged, yet the same Church has failed, after years of disclosures, to remove even one of the many American bishops who secretly and repeatedly enabled pedophilic predator priests to abuse Catholic children.

“Fr. Bourgeois arrived at his position through the dictates of his conscience,” said Dan Bartley, Voice of the Faithful president. “Where are the consciences of the Vatican officials who have scandalously failed to discipline those bishops who actively facilitated the abuse of Catholic children across the United States? Where is their sense of shame?”

### *Group Discussion*

The group proceeded to discuss a variety of topics related to the Vatican threat:

-- What do we mean by “conscience?”

- The Catholic Catechism’s definition of conscience

1778 Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:

- The formation of our conscience

1783 Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.

1784 The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

1785 In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path, 54 we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord’s Cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church.<sup>55</sup>

- Right and wrong formation of conscience

1790 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed.

The Great Silencing:

How We As a Church Handle Disagreement

The group agreed that women's ordination was not a matter of doctrine, but an organizational issue. The group discussed the important roles played by women when Jesus was among us, and the important roles of women in the early Church. Many participants were also familiar with the work done by Sr. Chris Schenk of Future Church in promoting the presence and participation of women observers at the recent Synod held in Rome, which focused on Scripture. In light of this discussion, many participants felt that the threat of excommunication against Fr. Bourgeois was an extreme over-reaction by the Vatican against a challenge to its authority, and that no individual should be expelled from the Church for disagreement with hierarchical positions on Church life and custom, as opposed to doctrinal matters of faith and belief.

The group also discussed the increasingly aggressive attempts by the Vatican to silence discussion of controversial topics, including such recent examples as:

- The forced resignation of Fr. Thomas Reese, S.J. as editor in chief of America magazine in 2004, an event that was protested by VOTF through the gathering of a petition with more than 4,000 signatures that was sent to Rome.
- The silencing of theologians, sometimes with the threat of excommunication, including
  - Charles Curran
  - Leonardo Buff
  - Hans Kung
- The treatment of the Erie Benedictines (Order of Saint Benedict)

The group expanded the discussion to include the role played by a small but vocal minority of American bishops in the 2008 U.S. Election, during which they publicly stated that Catholics cannot vote for Barack Obama because of his position on abortion.

The discussion eventually turned to other issues on which the Church hierarchy attempts to enforce discipline by silencing discussion, including mandated celibacy, the rights of gays and lesbians, gay clergy, and of course, the ordination of women. On each issue, the group saw aggressive attempts on the part of the Church hierarchy to shut down discussion and debate by dictate. The group also concluded that to a large degree this effort has been effective. There are very few priests, including priests belonging to religious orders, who will openly preach on these sensitive topics. There are very few discussions in Catholic parishes today on these sensitive topics.

## *The Role of Voice of the Faithful: Conclusions and Next Steps*

At the conclusion of the evening's discussion, the group had arrived at a number of clear conclusions. No single speaker had presented these thoughts. Rather, the collective wisdom and reflection of the group had driven the discussion and debate to these end points:

1. We are increasingly called to stand and speak our consciences, just as Fr. Roy Bourgeois is doing. We should support him, and we must prepare ourselves to do likewise. On issue after issue, including the treatment of women in the Church, and the treatment of gays and lesbians, we must be prepared to stand as individuals and speak clearly on issues of justice, if our consciences so dictate. We will very likely be criticized and ostracized for such testimony, but we cannot avoid it. Our Church has shut down the discussion for many years, but the bishops cannot shut it down forever. Events and issues are coming to a boil, and we must prepare ourselves for hard truths and hard times.
2. VOTF has in the past attempted to avoid the controversial issue of women's ordination. The more we discussed the issue as framed by Fr. Bourgeois, an issue of justice and conscience, the more we as a group felt that such avoidance is increasingly untenable. As one participant expressed it, avoiding the issue "may be prudent, but it is certainly not prophetic." In fact, we began to believe that the issue of women's ordination could become the catalytic issue that will engage the broader laity in our work.
3. In the face of the "great silencing," VOTF's proper role is not to pretend to have all the answers. If we think we have all the answers, we merely replicate the hierarchy's behavior. The hierarchy shouts down discussion because the bishops believe they have all the answers. The conservative wing of the Church shouts down discussion and debate because they believe that the Church already embodies all the answers. We believe that no one has all the answers facing our Church today. It is only through discussion, debate and communal discernment that we can reach the truth on complex contemporary issues. Only through our collective wisdom and discernment can we determine the way forward. So even though everyone tells us to shut up, we have an obligation to speak up, not because we know what to do, but because we are ready to ask the questions that must be asked. And we know that it is only through the collective wisdom of the Christian community, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that we can find the truth.
4. As an affiliate, we will support Fr. Roy Bourgeois' conscience-shaped stand through a public statement of support accompanied by letters to the editor, to be issued now and when the official order of excommunication is issued.

## Site Seeing

### ***National Catholic Reporter* article on Voice of the Faithful.**

A recent article in NCR details VOTF's position and response to the recent excommunication of Father Roy Bourgeois. In a letter to the papal nuncio, referenced in the article, VOTF expressed a belief that the punishment of Fr. Bourgeois is disproportionate in comparison to the lack of action towards bishops who have knowingly protected pedophile priests.

Lay group calls Bourgeois move a 'scandal'

National Catholic Reporter, Missouri - Nov 26, 2008

By Tom Roberts Calling the impending excommunication of Maryknoll Fr. Roy Bourgeois "the true scandal," the Boston-based lay group, Voice of the Faithful, ...  
<http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/2707>

VoTF's Janet Hauter posted the following response to a recent article in the **Daily Herald Chicago** NW Suburban edition

"In a recent quote from The secretary of state for the Vatican, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, I read the following: "The world's financial crisis is the result of greed and an example of what happens when God, basic rights and the common good are ignored." I have only one question: Does this same standard apply to the greatest current scandal in the history of the Catholic Church (where lies, deceits, cover-ups, significant settlements to avoid total disclosure of personnel files and enabling acts of pedophile protection occurred in lieu of protecting our vulnerable children)?

The "good cardinal" is quick to point out our country's flaws but has he examined his organization's conscience recently? "

To read the article;

[Vatican's ironic view of financial crisis](#)

Chicago Daily Herald - Chicago,IL,USA

## Calendar

### **Boston College's Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Tuesday, December 9, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.

Alumni Advent Series (Part Two) "Jesus Fulfilled"

Boston College Club, 100 Federal St, Boston

Presenter: Daniel Harrington, S.J., Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

For more information go to [www.bc.edu/church2](http://www.bc.edu/church2)

Email your comments & suggestions to [church21@bc.edu](mailto:church21@bc.edu)

### **Wisdom House Retreat and Conference Center**

"Imagine Incarnation" retreat

Saturday December 13th from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm.

For further information and to register call Wisdom House at 860.567.3163, email [programs@wisdomhouse.org](mailto:programs@wisdomhouse.org), or visit [www.wisdomhouse.org](http://www.wisdomhouse.org).

### **Wisdom House Information**

Leo J. O'Donovan, SJ, will use images of great art to help participants imagine the human as well as the divine becoming human in this liturgical season. Special attention first will be given to the major figures of Advent and then to the fullness of Christmas, Epiphany and the Baptism of Christ as one mystery. Suggested texts and time for prayer will be given.

Father O'Donovan is president emeritus of Georgetown University. He has been Visiting Professor of Theology at Fordham University, BMW Distinguished Visitor at The American Academy in Berlin and Lecturer in Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

The fee is \$35 including lunch.

For further information and to register call Wisdom House at 860.567.3163, email [programs@wisdomhouse.org](mailto:programs@wisdomhouse.org), or visit [www.wisdomhouse.org](http://www.wisdomhouse.org).

**VOTFNJ** is sponsoring a talk by Elizabeth Johnson, Distinguished Professor of Theology, Fordham University. Dr. Johnson will speak on her latest book *Quest for the Living God* on January 14 at Drew University.

Any questions, please e-mail [info@votfnj.org](mailto:info@votfnj.org) or [www.votfnj.org](http://www.votfnj.org)

## **Book Corner**

*The Church: Evolution of Catholicism*

Reviewed by Dr. Tom Malone

McBrien, Richard P. 2008. *The Church: Evolution of Catholicism*. HarperOne, New York. 496 pp. \$29.95.

This splendid, sweeping survey of the Catholic Church by the distinguished Notre Dame scholar, Father Richard McBrien is an appropriate point of departure for reflection on the future of churches by individuals in all faiths. A central theme in the book is ecclesiology: the theological study of the Church whose sole purpose is pursuit of the Reign of God and the salvation of the human race.

To read more of Tom's review;

A Review of *The Church: Evolution of Catholicism*

From an opening chapter on the content and scope of ecclesiology, McBrien traces its historical development from the post-biblical time to the post-Vatican II period

(including for example the East-West Schism and the Protestant Reformation), ending with thoughtful reflections on the future of the Church and its ecclesiologies. From that vantage point, he describes ten pastoral applications that follow from the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World representing the ecclesiological mind of Vatican II. They are:

- fulfillment of the Church's fourfold mission of preaching and teaching Jesus Christ's gospel, celebrating the sacraments, renewal and reform and deploying available resources for the sake of those in need,
- dialogue and collaboration with other churches and ecclesial communities such as Judaism,
- pursuit of the content of Catholic social justice, peace, defense of human rights, advocacy and support of the poor, the powerless, and victims of discrimination,
- active but nonpartisan interest in the realm of the politics that address the needs of the poor and the powerless,
- reliance on the guidance by the Holy Spirit to lead the Church in spite of temporary setbacks in the work of the Church and its leadership at various levels,
- acceptance of the principle that the Church is both the People of God, a this-worldly reality built from the ground up and a community expressive of, and modeled after the inner communal life of the divine God,
- all authority in the Church is for service, never for domination or control,
- the process of formulating doctrine pronouncements and disciplinary decrees should involve in some representational way those who will be expected to embrace and abide by those doctrines and decrees,
- the major ministerial questions facing the Church today is whether all ministries, ordained as well as non-ordained, should be open to qualified women as they are to qualified men, and
- there should be the greatest treasure of freedom in the Church to develop the apostolate and new forms of religious communities. but always within the Church's overall framework.

McBrien concludes his book by outlining five trends given emphasis by Vatican II and suggestive of the continued evolution and development of the Church and its ecclesiology during the next several decades:

First, the Church in the twenty-first century is likely to be more self-consciously catholic and less rigidly denominational, more self-consciously multicultural and less culturally monolithic as a consequence of revolutionary advances in communication and transportation. There is a greater effort now to relate Christianity to the other great religions of the world and to develop new understanding of salvation, not only outside the Catholic Church, but outside the body of Christ as a whole. Ecclesiology is assuming an interfaith as well as an ecumenical character.

Second, the growing ecumenicity of the Church will make past differences between Churches and ecclesial communities more cultural than theological and more political

than doctrinal. Some forms of eucharistic sharing, common prayer, and collaboration in social ministry will emerge. The nature and exercise of authority, particularly of the papacy and of collegiality will be explored.

Third, the Church will be challenged to practice what it preaches and apply the main elements of its social teaching to itself. For example, women will be incorporated into the ministerial life of the Catholic Church, with no ordained ministry closed to them.

Fourth, the Church of the twenty-first century will be challenged to become even more fully committed to the quest for social justice, human rights, and peace.

Fifth, and finally, the Church will see itself not as a community apart from, or above, all others, but as a community in close relationship with all others in the human community and its family of religions.

In summary, this book is a notable and superb background for the development of a meaningful agenda for discussion among the diverse faith communities of the world, leading to a harmonious interaction that would ensure an attractive future for an evolving and expanding human race dependent on the natural resources of finite planet Earth. This is a challenge for which there should be an imaginative response.

*Dr. Malone has been a tenured faculty member at MIT, Senior Vice President and Director of Research at The Travelers Insurance Company, National President of the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union, and Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research (honor) Society, and Foreign Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences. He has been honored nationally and internationally for initiatives in collaborative research.*

## **Letter to the Editor**

Last night the North Shore Seacoast affiliate hosted a priest panel addressing the question "What is it like to be a priest?"

In the course of the discussion, one of the panelists asked the question "what do I have to prove to be considered a priest of integrity?" A side conversation with another panelist prior to this yielded the same question. He had been pondered the "priest of integrity" label and found it insulting.

I think the problem is one of interpretation. I believe that VOTF was trying to support those priests who visibly stood up for the children and the laity and themselves. Many priests appear to have interpreted it as "you are not a priest of integrity unless you've done something special." While this was never VOTF's intent, the interpretation is there. We can do one of two things. We can spend years trying to explain what we meant, or we can edit the goal to read that VOTF

will "support our priests."

Hopefully we, unlike the hierarchy, can change.

Brendan Walsh  
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Questions, Comments?  
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