

In the Vineyard

February 22, 2007

Lent among Christians was originally “the period of prebaptismal preparation, later of public penance. Finally it became a forty-day devotional preparation for Easter traditionally based on Jesus’ wilderness fast (Mark 1:13).” from the *Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul Achtemeier

NATIONAL News

VOTF National Representative Council (NRC) welcomes Bob Schwiderski as the new Region 8 (MN ND SD) representative. For additional Council news, see [NRC Update](#).

On Feb. 24 VOTF National will present **Bishop Thomas Gumbleton** with a Priest of Integrity Award. The presentation will be made at the Washington Plaza Hotel in Washington DC. The event is sponsored by the VOTF at Holy Trinity affiliate. (Watch for a report on this gathering in the next *Vineyard*.) As reported in the Feb. 8 *Vineyard*, the Bishop was not given permission to speak in the dioceses of Tucson and Phoenix AZ; he cancelled engagements there. Nonetheless, Bishop Gumbleton *was* heard. See the *Tucson Citizen* at <http://www.tucsoncitizen.com/daily/local/41152.php>.

The **VOTF National office** has some powerful DVDs to share with affiliates. See VOTF Office Notes; for details on our Executive Director search, [click here](#).

Also in this issue:

For everything you always wanted to know about conscience, but didn’t know where to look, see *Theologians’ Corner*. **SITE-Seeing, Etc.** links to Boston College C21 opportunities; Eugene Kennedy on baby boomers and VOTF; NCR on Tiananmen Square and the Bishop Gumbleton shunning; an article on diocesan reorganizations throughout the Northeast; and more reflection ideas for Lent. **DIOCESE/State Watch** covers New York City NY, Bridgeport CT, Palm Beach FL, Richmond VA and San Diego CA. **Affiliate Highlight – VOTF Regional conference** (Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana); **Commentary** on the New York City parish closings process and the end of a vigil; and the VOTF St. Louis commentary missing in the Feb. 8 issue (from VOTF St. Louis MO on the story of a Yakima WA priest’s transfer to St. Louis MO).

DIOCESE/State Watch: Highlights. See more [inside](#).

New York NY - According to the *New York Times*, Feb. 12: “A score of parishioners began a protest vigil inside a 120-year-old Roman Catholic church in East Harlem yesterday and vowed to stay until the Archdiocese of New York reverses its decision to close the parish as part of a broad reorganization. The protest at Our Lady Queen of Angels apparently took the church and the archdiocese by surprise” Subscribers can see the full text at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/12/nyregion/12church.html?_r=1&ref=nyregion&oref=slogin. The article notes David Gibson (author of *The Rule of Benedict*), who said that

“he saw little prospect of a successful prolonged protest against the New York Archdiocese closings. The ...Boston closings came amid ‘an almost perfect storm’ of anger over priest sex-abuse scandals. In New York, the closings were decided with ‘much greater care’ and over a much longer time.”

- VOTF NY issued a press release and VOTF NY’s Francis Piderit reports on the forced ending of a vigil. See Commentary – “Eyewitness to Irony”; also, see Chris Schenk of FutureChurch on parish closings.

Bridgeport CT – The tragic unraveling of another gifted pastor continues to draw passionate response from parishioners at St. Michael’s Church in the Archdiocese of Bridgeport CT. See recent commentary in the *Stamford Advocate* at <http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/search/dispatcher.front?target=article&Query=St.+Michael%27s+Church>. Also see links to this story and commentary from Dan Sullivan, VOTF Bridgeport, in the Feb. 8 *Vineyard*.

- The Bridgeport CT diocesan newsletter the *Fairfield County Catholic* published a markedly defensive editorial in which it noted, “The Op-Ed pages are also the favorite haunt of dissident groups like Voice of the Faithful, who jump on any contrarian bandwagon to gain publicity. They offer nothing constructive or even accurate, only vitriol.” VOTF Bridgeport is preparing a correction to the editorial’s misinformation.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

Boston College/Church in the 21st Century program will present “Called to Be Catholic: Religious Practices that Nourish Women’s Spirituality” on Feb. 24. For details and registration, go to <http://www.bc.edu/church21/programs/seriesonwomen/>.

- The much-praised C21 lectures that have anchored this program are now available in a set of five paperbacks (with more to come as the program continues). The Church in the 21st Century program is now a permanent center at Boston College. For reviews and ordering information, visit <http://www.bc.edu/church21/c21bookseries/>.
- Tim Muldoon, director of the Church in the 21st Century Center at Boston College has written a user-friendly and practical introduction to **Ignatian spirituality**: *The Ignatian Workout – Daily Spiritual Exercises for a Healthy Faith*, Loyola Press, 2004 is available at the Boston College bookstore and Amazon.com.

A *National Catholic Reporter* editorial finds a message in comparing events at **Tiananmen Square in 1989** and the recent U.S. diocesan cold shoulder toward **Bishop Gumbleton in 2007**: “China is a far stretch from the Tucson, Ariz., diocese or any other U.S. diocese, and information flows as freely here as anywhere. The comparison, however, dramatizes the futility of insisting that Catholics not think, discuss or entertain dissident notions about teachings such as women in the church and homosexuality.” Go to http://ncronline.org:80/NCR_Online/archives2/2007a/021607/021607q.php.

According to *NCR*, “Faced with rising costs and shifting populations, several **dioceses in the Northeast United States announced reorganization plans** in mid-January that involve closing or merging many of their parishes and schools. See http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2007a/021607/021607j.php.

The Feb. 23 **Commonweal magazine** editorial weighs in on financial accountability referencing the Richmond VA situation (see DIOCESE/State Watch). Go to http://www.commonwealmagazine.org:80/article.php?id_article=1858.

SensusFidelium.org is the creation of VOTF’s Stan and Eileen Doherty of Hingham MA. It was created “by some people in the Boston area to capture the experiences, voices, and visuals of Roman Catholics resisting the unjust closure of parishes.” The Dohertys also post reflections on scripture and prayers written by people in small faith communities, vigiling parishes, and other faith communities. These are truly the “voices” of the faithful. Visit <http://sensusfidelium.org/page4.html>.

In a commentary on baby boomers, **Eugene Kennedy**, Loyola University professor emeritus of psychology, says, “Boomers will also change the approach of such **reasonable Catholic groups as Voice of the Faithful** or Call to Action, who seek not only accountability but dialogue with their bishops in order to modify church structures. They make very little progress. The boomers who remain will simply put their demands on the table. They do not negotiate, they expect their needs to be met. This would change Catholicism more than any other initiative now under way by traditional reformers.” See the *Atlantic Journal-Constitution* at <http://www.ajc.com:80/opinion/content/opinion/stories/2007/02/16/0216edkennedy.html>. Let us know what *you* think. Write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Commentary

“Eyewitness to Irony” – Francis Piderit, VOTF NY reports on diocesan handling of a parish vigil

“History Repeating Itself” – Robert Kaintz, VOTF MO

Theologian’s Corner – A Lenten exercise

QUOTE for Our Time: “What makes the Spiritual Exercises a helpful guide for us postmoderns is its insistence that we can come to know God by coming to know ourselves better.” from *The Ignatian Workout – Daily Spiritual Exercises for a Healthy Faith* by Tim Muldoon

National Representative Council Update

The first bi-annual meeting of the Council will be held April 27-29 in Newton MA at Our Lady Help of Christians. [Click here](#) to identify your representative. (Elected representatives unable to attend are encouraged to choose a substitute.)

The Council is continuing its assessment of several efforts: VOTF priorities after the current Accountability Campaigns end; requests from the Goal 2 National Working Group to support a study of priesthood requirements and structures affecting the laity; VOTF policy on the appropriate balance between National and local affiliates.

In addition, many regions will be holding their biannual election of the regional Representatives to the Council. If your region is hosting an election, you should be hearing about it soon. Voting will be conducted in March.

VOTF National Office Note

VOTF National has a number of DVD's available for use by affiliates. The most recent acquisition is "**Hand of God**" recently shown nation-wide on PBS' "Frontline". This is the story of one family's coming to grips with clergy abuse and how it affected the lives of all family members. It also vividly demonstrates the way in which the hierarchy covered up a known serial predator priest. See <http://imdb.com/title/tt0805542/> (90 min) Also available are the following:

"**Our Fathers**" – a dramatized account based on the award-winning book of the same name of the clergy abuse scandal in the Archdiocese of Boston
<http://imdb.com/title/tt0421108/> (130 min);

"**Twist of Faith**" (Documentary) – A man confronts the trauma of his sexual abuse as a boy by a Catholic priest only to find his decision shatters his relationships with his family, community and faith. See <http://imdb.com/title/tt0436857/> (87 min);

"**Our Lady's**" (Documentary) – The story of how one Boston suburban parish, energized by a dynamic leader, rose up against the Church hierarchy to demand their voices be heard. Witness the early days of VOTF in action. (26 min);

"**Closed on Sundays**" (Documentary) – The story of a courageous priest and his parish and their attempt to resist their parish's closing in a low income area of Boston;

"**The Voice of the Faithful Speaks**" – An excellent introduction to Voice of the Faithful and its three goals. Produced by VOTF Cincinnati (12 min).

For more information and to reserve a copy for an affiliate meeting, contact Alice Campanella at Parish Voice acampanella@votf.org

DIOCESE/State Watch

[See page 1 for updates on New York City parish closings and the most recent turmoil at a Bridgeport CT parish.]

More from **New York**: "A federal judge has fined an attorney \$8,000 for repeatedly bringing lawsuits accusing Roman Catholic leaders of conspiring to cover up sexual

abuse by priests.” One of the cases thrown out “involved a priest in Newark, N.J., the Rev. Robert Hoatson, who claimed he was forced out of a parochial school job for being critical of the church's handling of abuse cases.” See Associated Press coverage at http://www.amny.com:80/news/local/wire/ny-bc-ny--churchabuse-lawsu0209feb09_0,3873770.story?coll=ny-ap-regional-wire.

Palm Beach FL – Time CNN updates the stunning \$8.6 million embezzlement story at St. Vincent Ferrer Church in Delray Beach FL, in the diocese of Palm Beach FL. The story quotes Terry McKiernan of BishopAccountability.org: “So the job may be left to Catholic laity. The sex-abuse litigation ‘forced church documents like parish audits into the open for the first time ever,’ says McKiernan, emboldening more lay scrutiny.” http://groups.google.fr/group/sci.lang/browse_thread/thread/2afe6620e1a8424f/819d03aab84c1a00.

Richmond VA - The *Richmond Times Dispatch* reports: “The Catholic Diocese of Richmond may change little about its financial practices, at least immediately, in the wake of embezzlement scandals at three churches.” Go to http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD/MGArticle/RTD_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1149193042906. Also note related stories at <http://search.timesdispatch.com/Search.jsp>; and *Commonweal* magazine editorial at http://www.commonwealmagazine.org:80/article.php?id_article=1858.

San Diego, CA - The *Riverside Press-Enterprise* reports: “With trial set to begin this month in the first of the long-stalled Southern California clergy-abuse lawsuits, the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego has asked a state appellate court to dismiss some of the pending claims. Attorneys for the diocese also requested the 2nd District Court of Appeals to postpone the trials.” Go to http://www.pe.com/localnews/religion/stories/PE_News_Local_D_diocese13.24347e3.html.

Affiliate Highlight – Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana Regional Conference

“When Promises Hurt—Challenging Institutional Secrecy” is scheduled for **April 28 at the Cintas Center on the Xavier University campus from 9 am to 4:30 pm**. The three authors of *Sex, Priests and Secret Codes* are the keynote speakers for the daylong event that will also include breakout sessions for individual discussions with each of the speakers. A sexual abuse survivor will also share experiences and insights during the conference.

The authors—Thomas P. Doyle, A.W.R. Sipe and Patrick J. Wall—are well known as advocates for church abuse survivors and for their commitment to the development of processes and policies to end sexual abuse throughout the church.

This is a regional conference for members and interested persons from Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. It is focused on the group’s 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.”

For more information, please contact Christi Eisenberg at seveer7@cinci.rr.com

COMMENTARY

History Repeating Itself

Robert Kaintz

The following is the text of a letter sent to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *St. Louis Review* in response to the transfer of Fr. Darrel Mitchell from Yakima, Washington to the St Louis archdiocese. Fr. Mitchell has since left St. Louis rather than meet with the parishioners of St. Ambrose parish. [See *Vineyard* Jan. 25 coverage]

Accountability has become a critical issue in the Catholic Church resulting in the concern of lay groups such as Voice of the Faithful. Recent events in St Louis demonstrate how far-reaching the issue can be. As recently reported in the Post, parishioners at St Ambrose parish requested an explanation for why a priest was removed from his diocese in Yakima WA and reassigned to St Louis, after allegations of impropriety. The laity asked for an accounting and the priest resigned. While this may not solve the systemic problem of reassignment of troubled priests, it did address the specific incident. Increasingly, the Catholic laity is asking for openness in its Church, not only regarding the sexual abuse scandal, but in finances and in governance as well. The incident at St Ambrose demonstrates that an active laity which collaborates with its clergy can be effective in improving transparency, but only at the cost of challenging existing procedures. Carol Williams, St Louis and Bill Brinkmann, Crystal Lake Park

We also discussed the archdiocesan proposal on centralized accounting. We have had both positive and negative reactions on the local level. The proposal would decrease the possibility of fraud but also move control of finances away from parish finance committees to the archdiocesan level. We feel this proposal does present an opportunity to influence policy and would welcome input and resources from national VOTF. This also may be an opportunity to obtain a seat at the table with Archbishop Burke and enable us to obtain the appropriate safeguards in the policy. My understanding is that there has been quite a bit negative reaction from the clergy so our support may be of value to him in selling this policy to the archdiocese. I must say that I am not optimistic that he will sit down and talk with us on this subject.

Perhaps the most interesting recent development in St. Louis was a joint meeting of VOTFSL and FOSIL. FOSIL is the Fellowship of Southern Illinois Laity, an organization of lay Catholics working in the tradition of the early Christian community, to keep the voice of prophecy alive. Their membership extends worldwide. FOSIL is a member of COR – Catholic Organizations for Renewal – which is a coalition of Catholic groups, inspired by Vatican II, to further reform and renewal of the Catholic Church. FOSIL is also a “cooperating organization” of Call to Action. FOSIL is based in

Belleveille, Illinois and was instrumental in holding the first Lay Synod in the Diocese of Belleveille.

Eyewitness to Irony

Francis X. Piderit, VOTF NY

[Our Lady Queen of Angels is in East Harlem, NY. The archdiocesan reconfiguration plan is detailed at <http://archny.org/news-events/news-press-releases/index.cfm?i=3501>). See an excerpt from a message sent by Chris Schenk of FutureChurch following Francis' report.

Francis Piderit notes, "We did not act as instigators of this vigil or any other action. We did not contact all the parishes when the closing list was published in January, as was implied in a recent *Boston Globe* article. We supported parishioners who stood up to defend their faith communities, but we did not incite their actions." The *Boston Globe* article is at http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/02/14/hub_groups_resist_closing_of_churches_in_3_other_states/.]

I am sorry to report that the vigil at Our Lady Queen of Angels was stopped last night shortly after 11PM. We are still piecing together the complete chain of events, but as an eyewitness I can attest to the following:

A press conference was held outside the church at 2PM, during which the locks on the church lavatory were surreptitiously changed. Several large men unknown to the parishioners appeared in the church around 7PM. These men turned out to be hired by the Archdiocese as security agents. The parishioners called the police because they did not know who these unknown men were.

All the doors of the church were locked by the security agents, and anyone trying to enter the church whenever the side door was opened was forcibly shoved back out into the street, including me. Police outside stood by while this occurred.

Priests from the Archdiocese entered the church at approx. 9PM and addressed the crowd of about 30 parishioners, including men, women and children, asking everyone to leave. The priests then retreated to the sacristy and did not appear again.

At approx. 9:30PM, Carmen Villegas, chairperson of Our Lady Queen of Angels, managed to open one outside door. Several supporters rushed in, along with many members of the media and camera crews.

The camera crews were physically forced to leave the church shortly thereafter by the security agents. There was scuffling in the aisles and some of the news crews were nearly shoved to the floor. (I am still trying to determine whether all this took place in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.)

A police lieutenant and two other officers entered the church, and began to talk with a City Councilwoman who had entered the church when the doors were opened at 9:30PM, and then with the priests sequestered in the sacristy. In the church, the parishioners continued to pray the rosary and sing hymns. Soon the police captain from the precinct joined the group.

For the next 90 minutes, the police shuttled back and forth between the parishioners in the pews, and the priests in the sacristy. Negotiations went back and forth. The lawyer for the parishioners arrived on the scene but was refused access to the church.

At the end of this process, the police said that all parishioners had to vacate the church by 11:30PM, or everyone would be arrested. Carmen Villegas and the other leaders of the parishioners considered all the available options, but it was clear that the police were going to back the claim by the Archdiocese that it was the owner of the property, that the parishioners were trespassing on church property, and that the parishioners would have to leave or face arrest for illegal trespassing. So the decision became: How do we best conclude this protest?

The decision was made to have six parishioners agree to be arrested and taken out of the church in hand-cuffs, so that all the media outside could see what was being done. All other protesters were to leave the church first.

When we left the church at approx. 11:15PM, the scene outside was surreal, camera crews and trucks everywhere. Some 15 minutes later, the six hand-cuffed parishioners were led single file down the driveway of the church, as a crowd of perhaps 100 supporters chanted "Save our church." The media rushed forward as they were being loaded into a police van in front of the church, and the arrested parishioners managed to shout brief comments to the press. Some of the children of the arrested parishioners were crying as their mothers were loaded into the vans. The parishioners were taken to the precinct on 102nd Street, where they were booked and then released.

These are the facts as best I can recall them.

In the end, the Archdiocese asserted, and the police backed, a claim to be the owner of real estate, and refused to acknowledge the rights of the parishioners to conduct a peaceful prayer vigil in their own church. The Archdiocese resorted to intimidation, threats of force, and invitations to police to enter the sanctuary of the church in order to suppress the vigil through threat of arrest.

I am trying to understand the true implications of these events. It is always about faith, but had I not seen these events with my own eyes, I never would have believed this could happen inside a Catholic church.

Chris Schenk of FutureChurch shares the following thoughts:

Apparently, Cardinal Egan has a policy that every parish must have a priest. The Capuchin Franciscans can no longer staff Our Lady Queen of Angels, so this appears to be a factor in the decision to close the parish. While Queen of angels “has dwindled to 400 at Sunday services” (see excerpt below) it is important to remember that a) this is a LARGE congregation by protestant standards and b) 400 committed Catholics in a poorer neighborhood may have more Gospel impact than 4000 or even 40,000 in a more affluent neighborhood.

FutureChurch is working to keep viable parishes open with parish life coordinators rather than close them simply because no priest is available.

I have been in contact with several New York folks who are involved. The parish is largely Hispanic and in a poor area. In a neighborhood where there are evangelical storefront churches on every corner, it makes little sense to remove this vibrant Latino presence. Latina Carmen Villegas is providing important leadership. FutureChurch has supplied resources to some of the leadership and is sending Carmen our “Spanish Women Witnesses” and “Save our Parish Community” resource packet (which has prayers for use at vigils and other good resources) to Our Lady Queen of Angels. These materials are available at www.futurechurch.org/sopc/packet.htm.

Voice of the Faithful NY Supports Our Lady Queen of Angels Vigil in East Harlem

In the wake of recently announced parish closings in the Archdiocese of New York, parishioners have been supported by VOTF NY, Council of Parishes (Boston MA) and parishioners from churches all over the archdiocese and beyond. Below is excerpted text from VOTF NY's press release.

New York, New York, Feb. 12: Voice of the Faithful New York supports the parishioners of Our Lady Queen of Angels parish in East Harlem, who began a 24-hour, round-the-clock vigil yesterday to save their church from threatened closure. Located at 226 East 113th Street in East Harlem, Our Lady Queen of Angels has several hundred parishioners and serves the spiritual and pastoral needs of community residents, including significant immigrant populations from Central and South America....

The Archdiocese of New York published a list of 10 parishes to be closed and 11 parishes to be merged on Jan. 19, as part of its parish realignment initiative. Another parish not on the list was notified of its closure by fax. Archdiocesan officials provided no reasons why specific parishes must close or merge. Our Lady of the Rosary in Yonkers already closed this past Sunday, and two parishioners protesting the closure were arrested by police inside the church and charged with illegal trespass.

“We do not protest every closure decision,” said Francis Piderit, a member of the leadership team for Voice of the Faithful New York, “but principles for the realignment have been discussed only in general terms,” said Piderit.... “The attitude of the archdiocese seems to be, ‘Trust us.’ But the last time we trusted our bishops with

something we loved -- our children -- that trust was too often tragically abused. Will our parishes fare any better?"

A parish church is a physical reflection of the true parish, which consists of the people who gather to worship together in that building. A decision to close a building is effectively a decision to shut down a faith community. The members of a parish who sacrificed to build and financially support the church, and to carry out its mission over many years, deserve to know the reasons why their parish must close.

The absence of a resident priest is not a reason for closing a parish, in the view of Voice of the Faithful. Many parishes across the US have demonstrated that they can survive and even thrive under the guidance of non-clerical parish administrators, with visiting priests for liturgies. Given the shrinking number of priests in the US, every decision to close a parish because a priest is not in residence is a decision to abandon the mission given to Catholics by Jesus Christ to go and spread the Good News to the entire world. In the Albany Diocese alone, there are 26 parishes run by lay administrators, with priests that live centrally and support multiple parishes. This is where the Catholic Church is headed nationally.

The archdiocese has said that it will not sell the property of any parish that is closed. Yet the property of St. Ann's Parish on 12th Street was sold, and construction of new buildings has already begun. The fact is that many of the parishes slated for closing in Manhattan are located in economically challenged neighborhoods, and lie on valuable real estate. Voice of the Faithful agrees with the view of parishioners of Our Lady Queen of Angels that they are being discriminated against because their community is less affluent than other parishes in Manhattan.

Voice of the Faithful calls on the archdiocese to withdraw the letter of suppression issued to Our Lady Queen of Angels at the earliest possible date. Voice of the Faithful also calls on the archdiocese to provide public explanations of the reasons behind all decisions to close or merge a parish, so that these reasons can be evaluated on their merits.

For the future, VOTF believes that parishes should only be closed or merged through a communal process of discussion, debate, prayer and discernment in which all the members of the community—the laity, the clergy and other religious – confront the strengths and needs of the faith community honestly and openly. Parishes with strong and vibrant faith communities should present reasonable plans for worship and for financial support of continued operations to the entire community. A local determination on a parish closing or merger should then be made through a formal vote. Final decisions should be entrusted to the bishop in consultation with publicly elected, voting members of the clergy and laity seated on diocesan-level pastoral councils.

THEOLOGIANS' Corner

This material was assembled by the Convocation Implementation Team as part of the Lenten Action Plan. For the full text of the Action Plan, [click here](#).

CATHOLIC TEACHING ON CONSCIENCE

In an age of scandals, and the almost daily reporting of the mismanagement of Church affairs by the hierarchy in our secular press, Catholics today often find themselves faced with the question of what does the Catholic Church teach concerning individual conscience.

1. What is conscience?

Conscience is "...the practical judgment or dictate of reason by which we judge what here and now is to be done as being good or to be avoided as evil"

[*Human Life in Our Day*, pastoral letter of the American hierarchy, p.14]

2. Is conscience the ultimate authority?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, basing its teaching on the Gospels, Vatican II and on theologians like Saint Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Newman, affirms the teaching that the conscience is the ultimate authority: "A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself" (CCC #1790).

3. What is the Catholic's obligation when forming one's conscience?

The Church recognizes that at times the individual's conscience may be erroneous and the Church obligates every Catholic to seek the truth using every means at his/her disposal in order to resolve conflicts between Church teaching and an individual's conscience. This obligation is what is meant by having an informed conscience and is most serious as it is more than just deciding a moral issue based on one's feelings or comfort with a teaching. The individual must make an honest attempt to understand Church teaching and the gospel values promoted by that teaching. In making that attempt, Catholics may look at the arguments of responsible theologians in opposition to the teaching and to all areas of secular and scientific knowledge which might conflict with the teaching.

When it comes to fallible faith and moral teachings, or on Church policy teachings (fallible by their very nature), the Catholic may respectfully disagree and may even publicly work within the Church for change.

Examples of where changes in Church teaching have taken place abound in our history, issues such as the morality of slavery, religious freedom, separation of Church and State, priesthood and celibacy, the morality of charging interest, etc. On each of these issues and on many more our Church has modified and sometimes even reversed its teachings.

4. What rights do Catholics have to openly work for changes in non-infallible teaching and policy?

The 1983 Code of Canon Law explicitly states the following:

- The Christian faithful have the right to make known their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires to the pastors of the Church. [*Canon 212 #2*]

- They have the right and even at times a duty to manifest their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and **they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful**, with due regard for the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons. [*Canon 212 #3*]
- The Christian faithful are at liberty to freely found and govern associations for charitable and religious purposes or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world; **they are free to hold meetings to pursue these purposes in common.** [*Canon 215*]

RESOURCE MATERIAL ON CONSCIENCE

We encourage those who want more information on conscience to consult with these resources which complement our Lenten action.

1. *Your Conscience and Church Teaching, How Do They Fit Together*
By Rev. Nicholas Lohkamp, O.F.M.
<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac1282.asp>
2. *Moral Conscience: Catholic Teaching for a Strong Faith*
<http://www.beginningcatholic.com/conscience.html>
3. *Why You Can Disagree and Remain a Faithful Catholic*
By Rev. Philip S. Kaufman, O.S.B. 1995 Crossroad Publishing Company
4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
Article 6 Moral Conscience #1776 - #1782
1995 , An Image Book – Doubleday
5. *When wrong turns out to be right*
U.S. Catholic Magazine
<http://www.catholicireland.net/pages/index.php?nd=185&art=276>
6. VIDEO: *The Vision of Vatican II for Today* published by St. Anthony Messenger Press (The one titled “The People Are the Church” by Rev. Michael J. Himes deals with conscience and “sensus fidelium.”)