

In the Vineyard

February 28, 2008

In this issue: Letters to the editor comment thoughtfully on the Fr. Tom Doyle/VOTF Board of Trustees dialogue; archdiocesan newsletter publishes a VOTF member's letter; Joe O'Callaghan of VOTF Bridgeport (CT) offers commentary on "Recovering Our Conciliar Tradition"; a co-author of the recently published *American Catholics Today* William D'Antonio gave a recent talk that informs, surprises and encourages; VOTF members join others in their faith community to develop their own Triduum service (see Commentary: "Gathering for Triduum"); VOTF NH Carolyn Disco's Commentary on Legion of Christ founder Father Marcial Maciel's legacy; the papal visit itinerary is online; and more.

NATIONAL News

MEET our new officers! Click here for the results of the VOTF National Elections, which closed midnight Feb. 24; click here for recent press releases; see our one-page update "Focus" as we track current problems in our Church alongside signs of progress.

SURVIVOR Community Notes

Bob Schwiderski, VOTF National Representative Council member for Region 8 (ND, SD, MN) and director of SNAP in Minnesota isn't limiting his efforts to protect children to Catholic Church personnel. This story confirms again the rock and the hard place of forgiveness/rehabilitation and protecting children *wherever* clergy sexual abuse occurs. Go to http://www.twincities.com/ci_8329707?IADID=Search-www.twincities.com-www.twincities.com&nclick_check=1.

Commentary – "Recovering Our Conciliar Tradition" by Joe O'Callaghan, VOTF Bridgeport CT

"Gathering for Triduum" – VOTF members working with others to "be Church"

"One Man's Legacy: Farther Marcial Maciel" – Carolyn Disco, VOTF NH

CLARIFICATION: Pertaining to the Feb. 14 *Vineyard's* information on the play "DOUBT" – Jackie Donoghue adds this note: The 2004 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for Best Play *Doubt* is being presented at the Tony-Award winning Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park as part of the regular season's offerings and has a run from March 4 through April 4. *It is not a one-performance offering.* The Cincinnati and Louisville VOTF affiliates bought a block of tickets (group rates) at the Sunday, March 16 regular evening performance (one of the scheduled 35 performances); they are not "showing" it as one would show a movie for a specialized group. This is live, professional, public theater. The Perspectives presentation is often offered either before or after a play by the actors themselves to help the audience better understand/appreciate the play.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

April 3-4, 2008: “**Gender and Religion: Authority, Power, and Agency**” conference sponsored by the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and Harvard Divinity School. This is the seventh annual Gender Conference. For registration and program information, go to http://www.radcliffe.edu/events/conferences/2008_religion.php.

“The Catholic Spirit” is the newsletter for the **Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minnesota**. Colin Lavergne is a member of the **VOTF Twin Cities** Steering Committee. His letter, “The Church should help abuse victims find healing, justice” is at <http://thecatholicspirit.com/main.asp?SectionID=16&SubSectionID=16&ArticleID=1473>.

Dr. William D’Antonio, who co-authored with Anthony Pogorelc *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change* (reviewed in the 2/14 issue of *In the Vineyard*), recently published *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*. A recap of a talk delivered by Bill on the book’s findings is in the Archdiocese of Atlanta “Georgia Bulletin” at <http://www.georgiabulletin.org/local/2008/02/21/young/>.

According to a *National Catholic Reporter* story, “Kentucky’s four Catholic bishops expressed support for a bill in the state Legislature that would stiffen penalties for people in a position of trust who sexually abuse minors and for people who fail to report such abuse.” Read “**Bishops favor stiffer penalties**” at http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2008a/022208/022208c.htm.

Pope Benedict XVI will begin his US visit on April 15. For an overview of his itinerary go to <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2008/08-019.shtml>.

National Catholic Reporter: The December 7, 2007 issue featured a series of articles about the phenomenon of Catholic women seeking and achieving ordination. Whether or not Catholics choose to recognize these ordinations, the phenomenon is significant for the Church in the 21st Century – significant for those invested in Church reform and significant for the institutional Church. You can read the December 7 coverage at www.ncronline.org (click on Back Issues and go to Dec. 7, 2007) and commentary generated by that coverage at www.ncrcafe.com.

COMMENTARY

RECOVERING OUR CONCILIAR TRADITION

Joseph F. O’Callaghan

Faced with the crisis of priestly sexual abuse, the American bishops in 2002 proclaimed their adherence to the twin principles of accountability and transparency and adopted a

tepid statement promising fraternal correction. Nevertheless, the faithful are left without any assurance that the bishops will act on those principles. At present there are no effective structures in place that would enable the people to require an accounting from their spiritual leaders.

The need for structures of accountability is clearly evident and the history of the Church points to just such a means, namely, the diocesan, provincial, national, and ecumenical synods or councils held from the earliest times. The terms synod (from the Greek) and council (from the Latin) have essentially the same meaning. For the most part, though not always exclusively, these were assemblies of bishops gathered to discuss and to resolve a wide range of issues concerning the life of the Church, including creedal statements, questions of liturgical practice, the sacraments, and the spiritual life and discipline to be observed by the diverse members of the Christian community. In time scholars gathered the canons of church councils and organized them systematically in codes that could be utilized by the universal Church.

The conciliar mode of government characterized the Church from the earliest times as councils, large and small, assembled throughout the Christian world whenever significant matters needed resolution. By declaring that provincial councils should be held twice yearly the Council of Nicaea in 325 recognized the important role that councils could and did play in the life of the Church (c. 5). From the mid-eleventh century onward the conciliar model of Church government encountered the growing challenge of papal power. The Great Western Schism (1378-1419), pitting three popes against one another, however, created a new crisis of authority. Summoned to deal with this travesty, the Council of Constance set the principle of conciliarism against the unbridled authority of the pope, stating unequivocally in 1415 that final authority in the Church rests with a general council representing the whole body of the faithful. Ever since then popes have been wary of general councils. For that reason the convocation of the Council of Trent to deal with the Protestant Reformation was delayed until 1545, but by then the division between Protestant and Catholic Europe had solidified to such an extent that reconciliation was impossible.

Like Nicaea I, Trent recognized the importance of councils and decreed that diocesan councils should be summoned every year and provincial councils every three years. The American Church in the nineteenth century was in many ways a conciliar church as the bishops met with surprising frequency in provincial and later plenary councils at Baltimore. Papal suspicion of councils was so ingrained, however, that three hundred years elapsed between the end of the Council of Trent and Pius IX's convocation of Vatican I, whose proclamation of papal infallibility added new strength to the papal armory. Even though Vatican II encouraged the convocation of councils, few bishops have made that a consistent practice.

The Church cries out today for new structures that will hold bishops accountable to the priests and people they lead. A return to the earlier conciliar tradition of the Church will give new life and vigor to Christ's Body. Diocesan, provincial, national, and ecumenical councils or synods that are fully representative of the whole body of the faithful, bishops,

priests, deacons, religious, laymen and women, and possessing deliberative authority on every issue that affects our spiritual lives, doctrinal, liturgical, disciplinary, administrative, and financial, are essential.

[Joe O’Callaghan is a founding member of VOTF Bridgeport CT, professor emeritus of history at Fordham University in New York City NY, and author of, most recently, *Electing Our Bishops: How the Catholic Church Should Choose Its Leaders*. Published by Rowan and Littlefield in 2007, the book is available at book stores and amazon.com.]

On the Death of Legion of Christ Founder Fr. Marcial Maciel

Carolyn Disco, VOTF NH

Many obituaries for Legion of Christ founder Father Marcial Maciel, who died January 30, 2008, noted the sexual abuse charges against the priest by eight former seminarians in the 1940s and 1950s; his restriction to a life of penance by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006; and the suspension of the canonical case against him due to age. None went into much detail about the survivors, whose stories deserve recognition on the occasion of Maciel’s passing.

The church never adjudicated the sexual molestation charges, leaving those survivors in limbo. Who are they? They include a Mexico City university professor with a doctorate from Harvard; a faculty member at the US Defense Languages Institute in Monterey, CA; a retired priest in Madrid; a professor of psychology and sociology in Westchester County, New York; and also in Mexico, a lawyer, rancher, former university president, and private school professor.

All wanted to forget what happened and get on with their lives after leaving the Legion. It took many decades of chance encounters for them to find each other, gradually share their abuse histories, and only as Maciel continued gallingly to reap high praise from Pope John Paul II did they finally galvanize and file a canon law case in Rome. None wanted money; they only wanted justice, racked as they were by horrific memories, and fear for other victims after them. How many might there be? To date, John Allen, the veteran journalist at the *National Catholic Reporter*, reports Vatican sources cite “more than 20 but less than 100” victims.

I have the privilege of knowing Juan Vaca, the professor in Westchester, and his wife and daughter. Taken by Maciel at the age of 10 in Mexico and brought to Spain, where at 12 years Maciel began abusing him, Juan was confused and scared. His heart-rending story opens the book *Vows of Silence* by Jason Berry and the late Gerald Renner, which is credited with reopening the investigation against Maciel. The Legion founder’s success for decades in fooling elites and good people everywhere shows how vulnerable children had little chance of escaping his manipulations.

Berry and Renner chronicle how the victims were trained to believe that leaving the Legion meant going to hell; the mantra they learned was “lost vocation, sure damnation.” All were required to take additional vows never to say anything against Maciel or the Legion, and report any who did. (Those vows were just abolished recently by Pope Benedict XVI.)

And contrary to all other religious orders, regulations specifically mandated by Canon Law, and sound formation principles, your spiritual director in the Legion also was your supervisor. Boys approaching puberty were given whips for self-flagellation to ward off impure thoughts or acts. All in all, it was an ugly business, made more bizarre by Maciel’s disgusting molestations. Forty years after being abused, Juan’s wife told me of his waking in terror from nightmares, calling Maciel’s name to stop.

Maciel was expelled from two seminaries in Mexico, and ordained only after private study with one of his three bishop uncles. Late in life, he pushed for his mother to be declared a saint, and told supporters not to start his canonization until 30 years after his death. But it is the survivors of abuse, not Maciel, who should in some future generation find official sanctity for their courage, wrested from the depths of pain, to tell the truth.

The Vatican’s denial of a verdict is a searing injustice. At one point, the survivors’ canon lawyer made an astounding and uncharacteristic suggestion that it was “better for eight innocent men to suffer than thousands of people losing their faith.” Her clients believe firmly the lawyer was repeating a rationale by a Vatican official.

Absent canonical ruling, judgment is possible, at least in the court of public opinion. Jason Berry has made a film of the same title as his book. It is in private showings around the country awaiting mass media distribution – a gripping account of innocence lost, and the ravages of money and power at the service of evil. The truth will not be silent forever.

Carolyn B. Disco
Survivor Support Chairman
NH Voice of the Faithful

Links:

<http://www.regainnetwork.org/article.php?a=47246020>

“I Am Looking for Boys Like You” by Juan Jose Vaca from “Vows of Silence” by Jason Berry and Gerald Renner with minor edits approved by JJV (*The Unspeakable Ordeal of Juan Jose Vaca*)

<http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=123910&page=1>

ABC News: 4-26-02 “Sexual Abuse Allegations Covered-Up by Vatican; Powerful Cardinal in Vatican Accused of Sexual Abuse Cover-Up” by Brian Ross

Gathering for Triduum

The following is one example of what “two or more” can put into place for the three days – the Triduum – that conclude Holy Week (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil). With so many churches closing and a growing interest in lay spirituality, the Virginia Gathering of Friends (GoF) is pleased to share their own efforts. The group came together from a need for spiritual enrichment, fellowship and Christian education that was not being met within the local parish. Most members of the local VOTF have joined the group, which has now grown to include members of other parishes in the region who also felt the need for additional spiritual development.

The group, now in its third year, meets monthly for prayer, mass or a liturgical service, holds a picnic/liturgy each fall, has sponsored two highly successful annual weekend retreats, and recently completed a member-organized and -presented adult formation program on the Pentateuch. An 11-person leadership team guides the Gathering’s consensus-driven activities with the input and approval of the group. As an egalitarian community, the GoF welcomes all to union. Hoping to share the holiest season of the church year, the faith community of the GoF recently decided to celebrate the Triduum together. They are fortunate enough to have a priest for these three days, but all the planning has been done by the laity. To learn more, visit the Gathering of Friends web site at <http://www.gatheringoffriends.us/>.

HOLY Thursday

Opening Song: “Song of the Body of Christ” (Haas)
First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14
Psalm: “Our Blessing Cup” (Joncas)
Second Reading: 1 Cor 11:23-26
Gospel Acclamation and Gospel (John 13:1-15)
Shared homily (Priest presider and a member of GOF with the chance for participants to also contribute to the discussion)
Washing of the feet: “Ubi Caritas” (The GOF leadership team will wash the feet of the participants and each other)
Shared Prayers of the Faithful
Dialogue Eucharistic Prayer and Eucharist (Song: “Christ Be Our Light”)
Transfer of Eucharist
Closing: Celtic Alleluia

GOOD Friday

Enter in Silence
Opening: Co-presiders from the group
Reading of the Passion/Tenebrae: John 18:1-19:42 is read in sections interspersed with song (Seven candles will be lit and as each reader finishes his/her part, one candle will be extinguished until all candles are out.)
Good Friday intercessions

Veneration of the Cross: “Via Crucis” (Ridge [member of GOF and a published composer])

Communion

Leave in silence

EASTER Vigil—Overall theme will reflect on Light, water, commitment, and Eucharist

Service of Light – a large candle begins the transfer of light until all the participants’ candles are aglow.

Song: “Exultet” (2 cantors and the congregation) (e.g. “This is the night....”

Genesis 1:1-2:2 (This reading will be accompanied by creation slides shown on the wall)

Psalm 66: “Cry Out to God All the Earth” – Verse 1 (Ridge)

Exodus 14:15-15:1 (Story will be told rather than read by a talented GOF member)

Psalm 66: “Cry Out ...” – Verse 3

Isaiah 55:1-11

Psalm 66: “Cry Out ...” – Verse 5

Ezekiel 36:1-17a, 18-28

Psalm 66: “Cry Out ...” – Verse 7

Renewal of Baptismal Promise

Blessing of Water – the gathered come forward to bless themselves as a sign that by our Baptism we are anointed priest, prophet and king

Litany of the Saints sung as the people come forward to seal their Baptismal promises

Epistle: Romans 6:3-11

Gospel Acclamation: Celtic Alleluia, Psalm 118, verses 1-3

Gospel: Matthew 28:1-10

Homily by Priest presider

Shared Prayers of the Faithful

Dialogue Eucharistic Prayer

Communion

Closing Hymn

Reception to follow

LETTERS to the Editor

[The January 31, 2008 issue of *In the Vineyard* included a link to an [essay written by Fr. Tom Doyle](#) and a [reply](#) to that essay from the VOTF Board of Trustees. The essays generated dozens of replies. We include just a few of them below.]

“I’m not sure I can detect from here all the nuances of difference over this issue in the US, but my own view of what goal three (structural change) requires of me has certainly shifted since I first came on board.

First, the very word ‘structure’ frightens the life out of an awful lot of ‘pew’ Catholics. They can see the need for pastoral support of survivors, but to put heavy thrust behind ‘structural change’ of the clerical system tends to signal to many that those awful

'liberals' are attempting to use survivors and the abuse issue to leverage the horrible dissident 'liberal agenda.' The focus then tends to come off the issue of those whom the church has hurt and onto what might be broadly described as 'church politics' generally. That assists no goal of VOTF that I can see.

This is NOT to say, 'let's abandon or even forget about goal three' but to warn that HOW we go about it can actually empower reactionary elements within the church and frustrate both that goal and the care of survivors. I too believe that there is a connection between the way power is structured within the church and clerical sexual abuse, but I no longer see any hope of bringing about structural change by appealing to those empowered by the present system.

I think that what we should be doing is building structures of our own, at the base, that embody accountability, end clericalism, build consensus, and above all, give survivors (of all kinds of clericalist church abuse) a sense of a church in their own space they can comfortably belong to. Endless debate about electing bishops and popes can't do that, I think, because survivors generally tend to wonder 'do we really need those useless (ping) grandees, anyway?'

As I see it, the trajectory of the present centralised and unaccountable clerical church superstructure is (at least in the West) towards further scandal and decline – without any external help. Its proponents are ageing and dwindling and can only flourish by identifying 'enemies of the faith' to organise the fortress church against. A direct frontal assault upon their citadel plays right into their hands – and may also raise in the minds of survivors the question 'are we being used?'

The future surely lies in everyone networking from where they stand or sit, not in a struggle for control of the clericalised ghost of the Roman empire, or even for control of 'church property.' It has alienated and injured **people**. We need to reconvene and restructure as church, and where we do it doesn't matter – especially when so many in our goal one constituency can't go near what they knew as church for fear of gagging. Let's listen to *them* on the 'structures' *they* need to feel at ease with the Gospel, and leave the real estate, and the clerical superstructure, to those who think **that** is 'the church.'

And we can surely do that **without** driving the pew Catholics into the arms of the reactionaries. Many of those poor bewildered folk also wonder 'where has love gone?' Let's pray together and show them." *Sean O'Conaill, Coleraine, Ireland*

"Oh that the VOTF would write a cardinal or bishop with such fervor and distance themselves from them as easily as they do Tom Doyle. How dare VOTF distance itself from the one voice who has given so many survivors a voice? Such an ardent plea to remain the same, with the same institutions, the same leaders and the same blindness; it tears at my heart. Every person in my family was a victim of the insidious evil perpetuated by a corrupt hierarchy and yet they are still here. Bernie Law has only moved

his base of operations from Boston to Rome. He still has a voice in approving U.S. bishops.

This past year there have been several bishops who have, with total disregard for the Dallas Charter, failed to report abusive priests in their diocese and yet they are still here. Who can pat themselves on the back and say they have accomplished anything since 2002?

Take a good hard look at the record of the current 'church officials.' Under their auspices, attendance at mass has dropped, schools have closed, churches have closed, and they have presided over the biggest, ugliest, and most disgusting scandal to hit the church in modern times. Yet they are still here.

Time has opened up Tom Doyle's eyes. It has been interesting watching that transformation over the past several years. I have seen it before, I watched it in myself. Hopefully, VOTF's journey will be a shorter one because you have incontrovertible proof of the contempt the hierarchy has for anyone who challenges its power. My lesson cost me dearly. I have also seen VOTF become a little more aggressive and was impressed with the effort that was made to keep George out of the office of president of the USCCB. However well intentioned, he is still here.

In time the wisdom of Tom Doyle's words may penetrate the hardened ears of cradle Catholics. Maybe they won't. It matters not to me because like Tom, I have found spirituality. It is said that religion is for those that are afraid of going to hell and spirituality is for those who have already been there. If you can shed your belief in the hierarchy for a moment and take a candid look at what they really are, you might be inclined to prevent others from having to go through hell to find spirituality. It's your church, take it back!" *Vincent J. Nauheimer, New York*

"Doyle is obviously accurate in many of his descriptions of the problems we face, but I agree with Bob that the situation is far from hopeless. We are all aware of the changes that have occurred since the sex scandal was revealed, ranging from heavy judgments against dioceses, to presenting budgets often on the internet, to removal of guilty priests, to understanding and support for 'priests of integrity,' to, in some places, serious cooperation between clergy and laity. It is not perfect, and there is sliding back to reinventing Vatican II, but the church, especially in the US, is changing, although at a glacial pace. We are, in general, not the docile Catholics we were before Vatican II, and the sex scandals have reinforced our changing mentality.

I am opposed to a focus on only one of the VOTF goals, but if I had to choose, it would be Goal 3 on the grounds that there will not be much serious change, unless we get some structural changes. One factor which will promote success in this effort is the decline in the number of priests and reluctance to enter the priesthood especially because of the celibacy requirement. One factor militating against success is the apathy of Catholics and reluctance to add reform group activities to overloaded schedules. Where is God in all this? Hope is a gift we need now." *Eleanore Raven-Hamilton, Washington DC*

“I have carefully read both Fr. Tom Doyle's essay and your response. I must admit that when I first read Tom's essay, it greatly saddened me. Every time I hear him speak or speak with him, I have been amazed that after all he has been through, he would still choose to be part of such a church. After all, not only has his own life been threatened, his office broken into and his files stolen, his phone tapped, his jobs taken away and all the rest, but he has personally witnessed the cruelty of the church hierarchy to the victims of clergy sexual abuse. And yet, he continued to belong to a church that would treat him and all of us victims this way. Just last summer at the SNAP convention, he was still hopeful that change would come. He assured us that change has already happened and most of it is because of us victims who have come forward and done our best to hold the church accountable when all they would like to do is continue hiding this under the rug. I already had given up on the church, and, like I said, was amazed that he would continue to hold on to hope.

However, although saddened, I completely understand how Fr. Tom feels. The hierarchy is not going to give up their absolute control because, as the saying goes, they have been absolutely corrupted by it. I admire your optimism and hope, but, I, too, feel as if it is not something that will bring any change to fruition.

I was brought up Catholic. My father has been an ordained deacon for over 25 years, and a very active member of the Knights of Columbus for over 40. He and my mother - both 83 now - attend daily Mass, bring Communion to shut-ins, and assist at the TV Mass. I entered the convent after high school. I was sexually abused by my superior when I was a young sister. I no longer practice the religion. I saw a bumper sticker a while ago that stated, ‘It's a relationship not a religion,’ and that pretty much sums up where I am at this point. I have been a member of SNAP, and have many friends who were sexually abused either by a priest or religious woman. I have seen the cruel, self-serving, deceitful underbelly of the church. I no longer believe that reform is possible.”
Gabrielle Azzaro, Cardiff by the Sea, CA

”I am disappointed, but not surprised, at VOTF's response to Tom Doyle's comments on the illusory cause of church reform. As there is no way to reconcile VOTF's position with Tom's, I choose to stand with Tom. He was fighting these battles some 20 years before VOTF was created. Not only is his the voice of experience, it is also the voice of reason.

The Church that opposes both Tom and VOTF (and I choose my formulation carefully and with precision) is a politico-economic megalith that has less concern for the agenda of Jesus Christ than does the SPCA, Amnesty International, ACLU, or even AARP. For the Pope and his cohorts, it's all about Them, not about Truth or Love, the Golden Rule, or even common sense. Their hardball with the victims of Their clerical abuse (because pedophiles are a byproduct of the perversion they have allowed into the system) bears out Lord Acton's dictum (formulated in response to Pius IX's bootstrapping declaration of infallibility) that power corrupts, and absolute power does so to the max.

Now, VOTF's governing body, in its response to Tom, exposes its own secret nostalgia for that power. To my mind a true Christian would wish to neutralize such power and replace it with love. That is where I think VOTF has gone wrong. There can be no compromise with evil. This is a watershed moment, and one has to make the hard choice between rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic or abandoning ship. I propose VOTF take the latter course, and I base this advice on truths that VOTF had put forth earlier: that the pope and the curia and the College of Cardinals, and the incense and gold vestments and stigmata and all the rest of the baggage are not the Church, and if the leadership has betrayed the message of its Founder, then it is time to jettison this leadership altogether, not seek admission to its ranks. Setting a false goal such as power sharing with the current crop of hierarchs amounts to giving them the power to define the issues, and that renders the entire effort vain--no matter how pious the intent behind it--because it is working against itself.

VOTF's motto "Keep the Faith; change the Church" is a prophetic one, and those that respectfully disagree with Tom Doyle have lost sight of its meaning. For, changing the Church--and changing it from toe to top--is the only way to keep the Faith, that and taking this Faith back to its roots. Of all the Christian sects, Roman Catholics are among the worst when it comes to Biblical literacy. Instead of seeking to understand their Faith, Catholics are taught to keep alive a nostalgia for certain metaphors they were taught as children, forgetting along the way that they need to be taken as metaphors and not as literal fact. Just in the current issue of "In the Vineyard" there are two stories that underscore my point: the cancellation of a scheduled lecture from a respected theologian, Peter Phan, by administrative hacks (i.e., local bishops and monsignori), and the 'private audience' between the Pope and the new Jesuit General, asking the tactical equivalent of 'loyalty oaths' from the Order on matters involving, among others, the role, if any, of non-heterosexuals in the Church, and on eliminating the residue of 'liberation theology' in poverty-stricken areas of the world, notably Latin America. This 'preferential option' for the dogmatic over the needs of the poor demonstrates unequivocally that uncharitable repression from the Vatican is not only back, it never left.

If this Church is what VOTF wants to align with, then let me leave you with this ditty, redolent of the style of Alexander Pope, who might have lost his soul, but saved his mind:

‘God loves a fool and hears his voice,
but not a one who's fool by choice;
for he that dons a fool's disguise,
blasphemes the God Who made the Wise.’”

Udo Strutynski, Los Angeles CA

“I would like to respond very briefly to the Rev. Tom Doyle's essay and your response to it. Although I am not an active member in VOTF I do attempt to follow the emails and provide some monetary support now and then. The point that Tom Doyle makes, which I agree with, is that to expect an organization to clean up its act without strong outside influence is probably a very optimistic expectation. We have examples in our own government where institutionalized 'bad behavior' becomes acceptable since those in

government feed at the same table of greed and self interest. At least there, we have elections which give us half a chance to turn behaviors around. Tom's recommendation to work with legislatures to enact laws that will hold the Church's feet to the fire, I believe, is crucial to get the church to change. What other reasons would they change? Tom's observation about the church becoming more conservative with the rising of younger bishops and clergy will not make the job any easier. And what about the 'pay, pray, and obey' Catholics? Why aren't the laity making a lot of noise about these issues. We go to church and sit with the 800-pound gorilla in the pew and say and do nothing. I do not want to imply that I think sitting down and having tea' with bishops should not be done, but I believe any major structural change will need a force big enough to make an impact. Christ went through the temple and turned over the tables of the money changers and other merchants in a fit of anger. He made his point. The laity will have to make their point, and the mechanism may be the law." *Frank Pasquariello, New Jersey*

"I agree 100% with Tom Doyle and find VOTF's response most disappointing. While I can no longer sit in the pew and give tacit approval to an institution that I believe is fundamentally corrupt -- I have continued to be a member of VOTF and support its mission to advocate for victims and work for change.

Tom Doyle is right. Change will not come about with the help of the hierarchy. They must be forced to change, and the only thing they understand is either legal force or monetary force. As long as people continue to sit like sheep in the pews and give money to the church, they will not change. They don't care what we think! I will have to seriously consider whether to keep supporting VOTF, which seems to cling to naïve hopes and deny this crucial and very sad reality." *Karen Bate, Arlington VA*

"I am surprised and disappointed in your response to Tom Doyle's essay. You and many of us still have energy to work at Church reform while Tom has had it for now. But that is not the main point of his essay that is relevant to us. This is the point I would like to see all of us humbly respond to:

'What we have seen has been a clash between the deeply rooted clerical dependency that has been systematically woven into our very being by the institutional church, and Catholic Adulthood. It's a long, excruciatingly painful process to grow up in the Catholic Church. Most chronological adults never make it. No matter how liberated and avant-garde they believe themselves to be, there is still a very powerful core, deep down inside, that causes dependency feelings to take over whenever one is faced with the challenge of taking the risk of not only thinking but acting like an adult when in the realm of the Church world. To do so means to challenge the clerical office holders and to express opinions that they do not want to hear. To do so means taking the risk that some of them might try to capitalize on the magical thinking that has supported their power by threatening canonical penalties or equating disobedience to them with disobedience to Christ.'

Even your saying that you believe the church is a 'divine' institution has overtones of magic. The bishops are in no danger of being treated like morally responsible human beings as long as people think they speak for God. I believe the Catholic Church is well worth saving and reforming as an entirely human institution, but I think Tom Doyle is

very right about the laity not accepting adult equality with bishops and priests. Until we stand up, reform won't happen.” *Paula Ruddy, Minneapolis*

“I have just read the VOTF response to Tom Doyle's letter. I have served on the executive committee of our local VOTF affiliate since its inception (Including two years as co-chair). I respect the views expressed by the VOTF leadership, but I am in agreement with Tom Doyle's position. I think that as long as Catholics tolerate in the institutional church what we wouldn't dream of accepting from any other institution, we continue to be clerical and to act in a less than adult way. I have an MDiv and worked for the Church for many years, trying to effect change from within. Like Tom, I no longer believe that is possible. (Or maybe I am just too tired and banged-up from the process.) In any case, I do believe that we as laity have an enormous amount of power - more than priests, in fact. From my experience, there are only two things that a parish/diocese responds to: a significant drop in attendance and a significant drop in contributions. Priests can't make these things happen - only we can. While I was co-chair, I did the ‘tea with the bishop’ thing (come to think of it, he didn't even offer us tea) and it was, as Tom states, a sop. He made no commitments and has not responded to any of our requests or even to any of our subsequent letters.” *Margaret Costello, VOTF at Holy Trinity, Washington, DC*

Tom Doyle said: “I don't see any hope in trying to bring about meaningful reform of the structures.” There is not a lot of sophistication required for understanding that statement, and precious little room for misunderstanding it. Disagreement with that statement in no way implies disregard for or abandonment of survivors in their quest for justice and healing.

In the past 5 years it has been my privilege to meet and confer with many VOTF members. I have never met one who advocated “decoupling” VOTF from the sexual abuse crisis. Those who say that support for goals 2 and 3 somehow detracts from survivor support have an obligation to explain exactly how. I know of no VOTF affiliate that surrendered its right to protest in exchange for tea with the bishop. Calling for resignation when a bishop has the support of his docile priests and the pew people is worse than futile. It is a counterproductive demonstration of impotence. Dialog with church officials will not magically change clerical culture but it can correct misrepresentations of VOTF promulgated by the radical right, convince even mediocre bishops we are core rather than fringe Catholics and that we espouse structural change advocated by the majority of believers. Lay participation in selection of Bishops and pastors, and review of mandated celibacy must be pursued. In the words of Richard McBrien: “Keep hope alive, and your imaginations with it.” *Bob Rowden, San Rafael CA*