

In the Vineyard

January 17, 2008

Please send comments and inquiries to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth, and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God. *1 John 3*

We wish our readers a happy, healthy and *productive* 2008 as Voice of the Faithful moves toward our sixth anniversary in February. To get this year off on the same footing as we did in 2002 – listening – we extend an invitation. See What's New? in this issue.

ALSO in this issue: VOTF National Officer Elections – Who's running and why?; SNAP letter to the Pope supported by VOTF as Benedict XVI's US visit nears; will the Portland OR diocese seek to model how to be Church in the 21st Century?; review of Robert Blair Kaiser's new book *Cardinal Mahony: A Novel*; an innovative VOTF fundraising effort that won't cost you a dime (in SITE-Seeing, Etc.); survivors and survivor supporters in Ireland dismayed by Vatican's silence; and more.

VOTF National Notes

NATIONAL News – VOTF National Officer Elections (Feb. 10-24) are about to get under way. Click [here](#) to identify the candidates (from eight states coast to coast!), their backgrounds (a CPA, a lawyer, a blogger and a long-distance runner – just to name four), and visions for the future of VOTF.

Don't know if you are eligible to vote? Click [here](#) and find out!

VOICE of the Faithful: Impact and Prospects is the title of a “conversation” scheduled for February 27, 2008, at Boston College. BC's Church in the 21st Century Center is sponsoring the event, which features a panel asked to address two issues: the impact VOTF has made; and its prospects and possibilities for the future from the point of view of each panelist's experience and expertise.

The panelists are Jim Post, a founder and first President of VOTF; Alan Wolfe, Director of BC's Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life; Virginia Reinburg, Associate Professor of History at BC; and Monsignor Dennis Sheehan, priest of the Archdiocese of Boston.

For those in the Boston area, this conversation takes place at Gasson Hall 100 on Boston College's main campus, 7:00 pm, February 27. The event is free and open to all. For more information, call 617 552 0470.

YEAR in Review page is available from BishopAccountability.org – it’s a compilation, titled “2007: The Year in Review,” that summarizes 19 important stories in 2007 for those who support accountability in our Church and seek to ensure justice for survivors of clergy sexual abuse. The stories include links to investigative reporting, documents, and streaming video. Go to <http://www.bishop-accountability.org/2007/>

SURVIVOR Community Notes

SNAP letter to Pope Benedict XVI on the eve of his U. S. visit receives VOTF support. To read the full text of the letter go to <http://reform-network.net/?p=1323>.

DIOCESE/State Watch: Could it be? It appears that the Archdiocese of Portland is about to launch genuine dialogue among its parishioners. The aim is reconciliation. See <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/briefs/cns/20071227.htm> for more. We’ll keep tabs on how the process works.

BOOK Review & Notes – *Cardinal Mahony: A Novel* by Robert Blair Kaiser reviewed by VOTF’s Susan Vogt, Region 5 NRC representative.

- Also, see the “new” news about Australian Bishop Gregory Robinson’s planned U.S. tour.
- And Mary Gail Frawley-O’Dea’s book wins American Library Association award.

SITE-Seeing, Etc. is so full of *things you need to know* that we have given it a page of its own. Click here for links to “armchair education”; cost-free contributions to VOTF; *National Catholic Reporter* Reader’s Survey on “Inspirational Women” results; commentary from Boston’s Fr. Bob Bowers; and VOTF SW Florida’s change of venue for their guest speaker Fr. Charles Curran.

QUOTE for our time: “Who is going to save our Church? Not our bishops, not our priests and religious. It is up to you, the people. You have the minds, the eyes, the ears to save the Church. Your mission is to see that your priests act like priests, your bishops, like bishops, and your religious act like religious.” *Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, before the Knights of Columbus, June 1972*

WHAT’S NEW?

BOOK Review

Cardinal Mahony: A Novel

by Robert Blair Kaiser
Reviewed by Susan V. Vogt

As a writer, I love books. As a type A personality, I rarely read novels. (I tend to want my reading to be productive and not just for pleasure so I mostly read for information and self-improvement.) As a VOTF member, I want to reform the church not just rail against it. As a National Representative Council (NRC) member I was given the book *Cardinal Mahony: A Novel*. It was long. I didn't expect to really like it, or even read it. From the title I guessed it would be just another diatribe against the hierarchy which, despite any truth in it, would lead more to anger than action.

I was wrong.

On the flight back from the VOTF convention in Providence, my official VOTF work being completed, I was caught with nothing to read. I thought I would give it a try. From the first page I was hooked and couldn't put *Cardinal Mahony* down.

Cardinal Mahony taught me some important lessons – not about clergy sexual abuse, episcopal cover-ups, or church politics. I was already well versed in those areas. What it taught me was the value of a story, the value of seeing the good in people, and calling them to live up to their best selves rather than complaining about their faults. Jesus was on to something when he talked in parables even though it often confused and irritated his disciples. He was on to something when he talked with the woman at the well about her future more than her past. It's a lesson for everyone – especially people who like to talk and write in straight lines like I do. Sometimes fiction can tell more truth and crooked lines can be more effective.

Cardinal Mahony is a “Romero story.” It's the story of how a person can change and that gives me hope for the church. Instead of railing against all that is bad about a hierarchy that covered up numerous cases of clergy sexual abuse, it tells the story of what would happen if one of those hierarchs changed and did everything for which people in VOTF have been calling. What if he joined us and we were all trying to renew the church together?

For the fact lovers among us, don't worry, Robert Blair Kaiser includes plenty of background information about what the experts say contributes to sexual abuse of children and plenty of documentation a la quotes from canon lawyer, Tom Doyle, OP. I skimmed through those sections, however, as I was already familiar with that information, as are most active VOTF members. For those not steeped in VOTF and the history of the sexual abuse crisis, however, it's an educational experience. It was the story that pulled me to keep reading, not the underlying education woven through the novel.

While reading *Cardinal Mahony*, I couldn't help wonder what the real Cardinal Mahony might think if he read it. I'd like to think that instead of getting defensive, it would spark his imagination of how an ideal church, a church led by courageous men and women with a talent for inspiring, not just making rules, would look. *Cardinal Mahony* puts Cardinal Mahony in a very good light. It calls him and us to be our best selves in a church worthy of her founder.

While not wanting to give away the plot, a key action of Cardinal Mahony is that he calls for a national church synod including both bishops and lay men and women. It sounds uncannily like the synod that VOTF leaders are currently exploring in partnership with other national church organizations. Sometimes fiction drives reality.

Susan Vogt is a freelance speaker and writer on marriage, parenting, and spirituality (www.SusanVogt.net). She is a VOTF member and Region 5 Representative living in Covington, Kentucky.

AND ...

A note from VOTF member Mary Ann Norpel about **Australian Bishop Geoffrey Robinson**: About six weeks ago Charlie McMahon, one of our members, was in touch with Bishop Robinson who agreed to come to Philadelphia to speak to us. Later in Fort Benning I had occasion to chat with Tom Gumbleton and he indicated he would like to be in touch with the Bishop in the hope of bringing him to Detroit. I have also been in touch with Terry Dosh [of BREAD RISING (Minneapolis)] to let him know what is going on. Now I understand Bishop Robinson is doing a US tour.” SO! Watch the *Vineyard* pages and Google for Bishop Robinson’s itinerary.

- From another VOTF correspondent, “VOTF may also be interested to know that Bishop Robinson has some CD’s of his talks around the country. They are available from AQUINAS ACADEMY 141 Harrington St. Sydney 2000 or contact sandra@aquinas-academy.com.
- Bishop Robinson’s courageous book, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*, will be published in the U.S. by Liturgical Press this Spring; it was noted in the December 20, 2007, *Vineyard* and will be reviewed in the *Vineyard* following its publication.

Also ...

CHOICE Magazine, the magazine of the American Library Association, has chosen *Perversion of Power* by Mary Gail Frawley-O’Dea as one of its outstanding books of 2007. Reviews also appeared in the Fall 2007 Newsletter of the Division of Trauma Psychology (56) of the American Psychological Association, and in *Boston Magazine*, *The Boston Globe Sunday Magazine*, *Publisher’s Weekly*, *American Psychological Association Review of Books*, and the “Newsletter of the National Federation of Priests’ Councils.” Read more at http://www.vanderbiltuniversitypress.com/bookdetail.asp?book_id=4084.

SITE-Seeing, Etc. – January 17, 2008

Armchair education, anyone? Tune in to Boston College’s “Front Row” opportunities. These are video and audio recordings of 479 discussions, lectures, readings, and performances that have taken place at Boston College. Some viewers have formed

discussion groups around the various subjects raised. See what you think when you visit <http://frontrow.bc.edu/>.

Many VOTF members applauded a **recent commentary** (“**Slow healing in the Catholic church**”) by **Robert C. Bordone**, Thaddeus R. Beal Assistant Clinical Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and director of the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program, and **Rev. Robert J. Bowers**, consultant for Outreach and Reconciliation at the Paulist Center of Boston. Go to http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2008/01/01/slow_healing_in_the_catholic_church/ and also note a comment on the op-ed at http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/letters/articles/2008/01/04/work_together_toward_healing/.

U.S. Catholic magazine’s Reader’s Survey on “Inspirational Women” is on the stands and on line. Visit http://uscatholic.claretians.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=13019&news_iv_ctrl=0&abbr=usc. “The issue seems to be not whether there are female role models, but how well these strong women are promoted within the church. ‘They are all over the place,’ a website visitor says. ‘We just need to be pointing our young women toward them.’”

- Also, *National Catholic Reporter* took a look at Catholic women pursuing the ordained priesthood. See “Why wait?” at <http://ncrcafe.org/node/1479>.

Have you heard? Voice of the Faithful is registered with **Goodsearch**, a new search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. You use it just as you would any search engine, and it’s powered by Yahoo!, so you get great results. Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter **Voice of the Faithful** as the charity you want to support. Just 500 of us searching four times a day will raise about \$7,300 in a year without anyone spending a dime! And, be sure to spread the word!

Fr. Robert Pelton, *peritus* on **Cardinal Suenens' team** at Vatican II and Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame and long-time VOTF champion, has produced a five-DVD series on Vatican II's teaching about the laity. [Click here](#) for more **information and the order form**.

Change of venue note from VOTF SW Florida president Peg Clark: “The new Bishop Frank Dewane has banned Fr. Charles Curran from speaking on Catholic property; Curran’s presentation is VOTF of SWFL’s Speakers Forum’s major event of the season. We have changed our venue to St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church where Fr. Curran will speak on Feb. 7, 2008 at 7:00 PM. The church is located at 7100 Airport-Pulling Rd., N. Naples FL.”