

In the Vineyard

January 31, 2008

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

In this issue: Board of Trustees Responds to Fr. Tom Doyle; join our virtual town meeting with National VOTF’s officer candidates and get ready for the ONLINE VIDEO FORUM with the candidates; from Illinois to Australia, Catholics are writing to their bishops; a unique Lenten prayer service; archdiocese of St. Louis MO busily excommunicating parish councils and banning theologians; a good time for an introduction to the Madeleva Lecture Series; VOTF press release commends religion journalist; and more.

NATIONAL

Recently, Tom Doyle expressed his reservations about VOTF’s foundational commitment to structural reform of our Church. After giving Tom’s views careful consideration, particularly in light of his exceptional role in the sexual abuse crisis, the Board of Trustees **respectfully, but profoundly, disagrees** with the merits of his views. Click on this link to read the full letter of the Board to Tom Doyle.

JOIN the **conversation with our VOTF National officer** candidates. Just click, ask and be answered at http://votfelection.com/?page_id=32.

Mark your calendars for the big **CANDIDATES FORUM** scheduled for Feb. 4, 6, and 8. It’s a first for VOTF – streaming video, free audio tie-ins ... the details are on the **Elections web site**.

VOTF National issued a press release commending the work of *Chicago Sun Times* religion journalist Susan Hogan-Albach for her investigative work uncovering the **failed USCCB policy** for protecting children in the Chicago diocese in 2004. The coverage, most recently in “The cardinal, his men and the McCormack legacy” has generated considerable and thoughtful commentary.

It’s 2008; do you know what your **affiliate** is doing? Click here and pick your state from the growing list of affiliates with their own web sites. AND how much do you know about *your diocese*? See where (and if) your diocese stands in the **VOTF Diocesan Survey** http://www.votf.org/2007_survey/index.html.

DIOCESE/State Watch

Joliet IL

The VOTF affiliate here has written a letter to their bishop that might be a model for other affiliates. We reprint the letter under “Commentary” in this issue.

Belleville IL

“The good people and priests in the diocese of Belleville IL have demonstrated that they can successfully stand up to their Bishop and achieve justice.” For more on this story, see VOTF’s Focus. [Focus is the one-page update distributed between the publication weeks of *In the Vineyard*. To receive Focus, [click here](#).]

St. Louis MO

Readers will recall the tug of war over parish ownership that erupted in 2004 and eventuated in the ouster of two priests there and a rash of parish council excommunications. Subsequently the community called a new pastor, Fr. Marek Bozek, who has served the parish since then. **Archbishop Burke** recently began the defrocking process of Fr. Marek Bozek. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, it wasn’t *only* the parish’s refusal to hand over its assets to the archdiocese that stoked the Archbishop’s ire. For an update on this story, go to

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/religion/story/8F9B0CAA83E00B0F862573D10012D756?OpenDocument>.

- Archbishop Burke’s “concern” over a planned lecture by well-known Georgetown University theologian Peter Phan resulted in the **Aquinas Institute of Theology** withdrawing their invitation to Phan. Because time was so short, the college cancelled the lecture series that has been held there for 25 years. Phan’s 2004 book is under investigation by US bishops and the Vatican. See <http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/religion/story/A819107A957EBF61862573CC000F4705?OpenDocument>.

AUSTRALIA

A petition, signed by more than 16,000 Church-going Catholics, to Australia’s bishops expressing concern over the priest shortage there was incorporated and discussed at the bishops’ November meeting. The petition suggests several ways to address the need for “new forms of ministry and leadership.” To read the petition, go to

<http://www.petitiononline.com/PF2544/petition.html>. The bishops’ response is also available at <http://www.catholicsforministry.com.au/catholics-for-ministry/>.

BOOK Alert: VOTF member from Philadelphia **Dick Taylor** has written a book based on his own nonviolent stance in life. The book is *Love in Action: A Direct-Action Handbook for Catholics Using Nonviolence to Reform and Renew the Church*. You can learn a little more about Dick and the genesis of his book by visiting his web site at <http://www.gospelnonviolence.com/> where you can order the book. It is also available at amazon.com.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

FRIDAY/SATURDAY, APRIL 11-12, A **WEEKEND WITH EDWINA GATELEY**: St. Susanna Parish announces a remarkable weekend that will center on the possibilities of becoming a resurrection community. Edwina is an internationally known theologian, writer, poet, and artist who founded the Volunteer Missionary Movement; her ministry has taken her to places like Africa and the Sahara Desert. It will take place at St. Susanna

Parish, 262 Needham Street, Dedham, MA. Mark your calendars! For details and reservations, call St. Susanna Rectory at 781-329-9575.

The much-celebrated newly elected **head of the Society of Jesus** appears to have received his first “homework assignment”: According to Associated Press coverage, the Rev. Adolfo Nicolas said “the religious order would study the pontiff’s invitation to confirm their ... adherence to Catholic teaching, including on divorce, homosexuality and liberation theology.” See <http://www.pr-inside.com/print406391.htm>.

A new book by Santa Clara University theology professor Gary Macy considers the women who were ordained in the Catholic Church during the first 1200 years of Christianity. For more on *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*, go to <http://www.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=dcda94bb-cc98-405a-80d3-f0f7e9971428>

In keeping with **Pope Benedict’s focus in the upcoming synod** “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church”, readers might want to engage in a collaborative effort alongside the Synod. Noted by FutureChurch in its two-year campaign to promote synod awareness, Synod Council members have urged special attention to ‘the Word of God in liturgy, in preaching, in catechesis, in theology, spirituality, public and private meditation, enculturation and ecumenism.’ To that end, the Madeleva Lecture Series is worth investigating. Named after the legendary Sister Madeleva Wolff, CSC, president of Saint Mary’s College from 1934 to 1961, the series is well known internationally. Some of the most influential women scholars of the past twenty years are past-Madeleva Lecturers. In 2000 the lecturers collaborated as a group to write the now famous “Madeleva Manifesto: A Message of Hope and Courage.” To catch up on the various lectures and learn more about the series, visit <http://www3.saintmarys.edu/madeleva-lecture-series>. The lectures are also available in small paperbacks at amazon.com.

LENTEN Prayer Service with a fresh face: FutureChurch has compiled a special Lenten service including the Stations of the Cross that spotlights the stories of women on Jesus’ journey and the ongoing struggles of women around the world. Copies of the booklet are only \$2.50 each for 1-9 copies and less per copy for larger orders. For ordering information, email Barbara Litrell at blitrell@aol.com or call 928-649-0135.

Commentary

Dear Bishop Sartain:

We trust you had a wonderful holiday and look forward to the new year.

We would like to follow up with you on several items since our meeting last April, 2007. You may recall that we inquired as to when you would provide the Bishop's annual update letter in regard to the sexual abuse of children and teens in the parishes of the Joliet Diocese. You indicated that it would be published shortly. We have also inquired to your staff and understood that it would be forthcoming, but to date we have not seen such a letter from you on the diocesan website, in the parish bulletins, or in the Joliet Catholic Explorer newspaper.

As you can see from the Diocese website Bishop Imesh used to publish a letter in March of each year (the last one in 2006). We did note that the Diocese distributed a Dec. 14 press release on the annual Abuse Audit Report but have not seen your letter. We would like to emphasize again that lack of communication and transparency on this issue can confuse the faithful as to the level of sexual abuse allegations in the Joliet Diocese, and may perhaps lead parishioners to assume that there is much more inappropriate sexual activity under review by the Review Committee than may be the case.

We also noticed that the website now shows the members of this Review Committee. We are very pleased with the addition of this information to the diocesan website. We were concerned when the entire Committee list of members was removed previously from the diocesan website after the former Chair of the Review Committee was, himself, accused of abuse in 2006. It is heartening to note that a former judge (the Honorable William Penn) is now heading the Committee.

We have suggested several times before that, in the interest of full transparency and rebuilding trust, a chart showing the activity/disposition statistics of the Committee (not specific case information) be published on a quarterly basis. Perhaps you could discuss this with Judge Penn who would be familiar with such standard case statistics from the judicial system.

A final note is that we would appreciate your considering more public responses, such as press releases in the media and on the Diocese website, for all allegations of sexual abuse in the Joliet Diocese. Two recent situations that come to mind are the case of the church organist (Richard Stocker) who worked in several (9) Catholic parishes and high schools in the Joliet Diocese over the past 30 years. In 2007 he pled guilty to having hundreds of images of child pornography on his home computer. Two civil suits have also been filed against him by men who say that they were molested by him when they were high school students. However, there is no information about this case posted on the Joliet Diocesan website.

Also, there was the case of the priest, Fr. James Radek, who is accused of embezzling funds from the Joliet parish where he served as pastor. He pled guilty to this offense, but again, there is no information whatsoever about this person posted on the Joliet Diocesan website.

Without public notification and comment on remedial actions by the Diocese, the parish faithful affected by the perpetrator may be unaware of the inappropriate sexual or fiscal

activities that took place in their parishes. If parishioners (not just pastors) were notified of these activities in a timely fashion, additional victims and / or witnesses might come forward to corroborate (if correct) the allegations and start the healing process. In the case of fiscal mismanagement, better/stronger protocols might be instituted by the Parish Finance Councils to prevent future financial mismanagement/embezzlement.

Bishop Sartain, we, the membership of Voice of the Faithful in the Joliet Diocese, strongly believe that the parishioners are entitled to “full disclosure” of illegal and/or harmful activities that are perpetrated by any member of the parish staff, be they clergy or lay persons, so as to prevent such activities in the future. We hope and assume that you see the wisdom and the moral imperative of a “full disclosure” standard in regard to both sexual abuse of minors, and fiscal mismanagement of parish/diocesan funds.

We would appreciate your response, commitment and/or dialogue on these suggestions.

Sincerely,

Paul LeFort, Chair

Voice of the Faithful / Joliet Diocese

CC: Judge William Penn