

In the Vineyard

July 13, 2006

“The very fact that our ancestors in the faith found the need to include four versions of the same life embodies our faith’s testament to the collective wisdom of the faithful, of the wisdom found in a variety of views, of the wisdom of the divergent and collective. What an amazing solace this should be to each of us. God reveals God’s self to us in all of history, in all of our current lives lived.” Susan Troy, *Voice*, July 2002

Four years ago this month, on July 20, VOTF made its “stage debut” at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston, MA. On that bright, clear Saturday, one of our speakers, Prof. Tom Groome of Boston College, asked rhetorically, “What do you MEAN ‘change the Church’?!” VOTF continues to work toward meaningful reforms in our Church; as ever, we welcome thoughts on your own vision for “changing the Church” – write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

IN THIS ISSUE:

How will we ever “change the Church”? VOTF chose a path at our leadership convocation in July 2005 – to move the Church toward accountability *now*. See where the campaign is at (50 affiliates already!) and consider all the tools available for your own involvement, including the newest addition: Campaign Resources Detailing Legislation throughout the US: [State by State Guide for Statute of Limitations on Sexual Abuse](#) (PDF); [Recent Statute of Limitations Legislative Activity](#) (PDF); and [Delaying Statute of Limitations until discovery](#) (PDF). Click here.

ANOTHER WAY to help our Church is to **SAVE THESE DATES: October 19-21, 2007 for VOTF's third national convention** Details will follow on our web site and in this publication. Meanwhile, mark your 2007 calendar! [Catching up? **The first VOTF convention** on July 20, 2002 was titled “Response of the Faithful”; to read more about that day (and access tapes of various speakers and panels at the 2002 convention and the 2005 convocation), go to the VOTF website at www.votf.org and click on VOTF conferences on the left-side navigation bar. The pull-down menu will do the rest.]

Be informed: A recent e-conversation among VOTF members resurrected some valuable information from the **VOTF Structural Change Working Group**. Did you know that until 1983 there was no stipulation that a cardinal had to be ordained? See what else you might be missing – visit the SCWG page on our website at http://www.votf.org/Structural_Change/index.html; **NEW!** Protecting Our Children is part of our Accountability Campaign. Visit BishopAccountability.org’s new database of accused priests. Visitors to the site can view by name, diocese and state. Go to www.bishop-accountabilty.org.

Be involved: **National SNAP’s annual conference July 21-23** will feature voices of some of the most long-serving and ardent of survivor supporters: Jason Berry, Tom Doyle, Paul Baier, Tom Gumbleton, Richard Sipe and keynoter Marci Hamilton. VOTF secretary Gaile Pohlhaus is attending with VOTF president

Mary Pat Fox who will address the gathering. For more details, go to www.snapnetwork.org.

National VOTF approved new by-laws on June 12, 2006. Go to http://www.votf.org/Who_We_Are/officers.html and then click on “By Laws” (PDF Format); **VOTF National Representative Council (NRC)** June 2-4, 2006 Chicago meeting minutes are posted [here](#), including an **SOL (statutes of limitations) report** delivered by Frank Douglas, Region 13.

DIOCESE/State Watch: When the diocese of Santa Rosa, CA dawdled long enough over the case of admitted child abuser Fr. Ochoa so that he fled the state, Catholics again asked the same question raised in Chicago over Cardinal George’s failure to protect children from an accused priest, What will it take? VOTF North Bay responded in a [letter](#) to which you can add your name; **protecting children** is a little closer to reality in the **St. Petersburg, FL** diocese; **Burlington, VT** diocese seeks a judge’s recusal in upcoming abuse trial; the *New York Times* coverage of Fr. Fay’s life as a pastor in the **Bridgeport, CT** diocese is a portrait of negligence; **Toledo, OH** parishioners suing their diocese for control of parish assets; **VOTF Greater Cincinnati** will meet July 19 with Bishop Pilarczyk; update from **Brooklyn, NY** on the VOTF trip to the state legislature in Albany.

What do you think? A long way to go, no easy solutions and the threat of bankruptcy – that’s what Milwaukee Catholics heard from Archbishop Dolan. Catholic Online reports that the archbishop is worried about the outcome of pending decisions on 10 child sex abuse civil suits in California. Go to http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=20478. The question of justice for so many lives ruined is being pitted against the risk of bankruptcy in some parishes. Independent of the cost to parishes and dioceses of righting such horrific wrongs, financial mismanagement and/or secrecy in parishes and dioceses has long threatened Church operations (the case of Fr. Fay, Darien, CT – updated in Diocese/State Watch – is only one example). Thoughts? Write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Book Notes: An overview of *The Democracy of God: An American Catholicism* by Robert Willis; **Commentary:** “What Commitment Looks Like” – on Boston Area VOTF and “Understanding ‘Accountability’ in Santa Rosa, CA” – Carolyn Disco; **Letter to the editor** – a comment on Gaile Pohlhaus’s experience in Los Angeles (see the June 22 *Vineyard* for “Banging a Drum in LA”); **SITE-Seeing, Etc.:** Boston College on the cutting edge – again – with a graduate program in Church management, NCR comment on USCCB’s approval of liturgy changes, and much more.

QUOTE for our time: “As you stand in the valley, take a good look. A mountain is about to rise beneath your feet.” *A monk writing to VOTF in 2002 and published in our first hardcopy publication Voice, July 2002*

Next issue of *In the Vineyard*: July 27.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

The July 1 *Boston Globe* reports that “**Boston College is preparing to launch the nation's first* graduate program to train priests, nuns, and laypeople who manage Catholic parishes and organizations**, an effort to help the Catholic Church respond to the widespread criticism of its administrative, financial, and personnel practices during the clergy sexual abuse crisis.” Media coverage also noted, “The university [Boston College] has also become a primary location for discussion of controversial Church issues, particularly gender, that the diocese has been unwilling to tackle directly.” Subscribers can access the full article at www.boston.com or visit the BC web site at www.bc.edu for access to the *Boston Globe* article.

**Villanova University in Pennsylvania is exploring a similar program.*

A June 30 *National Catholic Reporter* editorial addressed the subject of recently USCCB-approved liturgy changes in “**Jarring history of the liturgy wars**” at http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006b/063006/063006t.htm. In part, the editorial said, “The language of battle is unfortunate because liturgy is supposed to serve as a point of union, not division. It is appropriate because the tactics used to reverse the reforms that had resulted from the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s and more than three decades of subsequent work were secretive and engineered by people incompetent in the discipline and accountable only to a small group who had achieved power. That power was used to accomplish what they could not by persuasion or through the mainstream of liturgical scholarship.” NCR also noted more than once the absence of women in these discussions, observing, “Of the group that met in secret, only one man (no women were included) held a graduate degree in scripture studies; two members were not native English speakers; another was from the United Kingdom and had spent no significant time in the United States; and the group included several members who came in with reputations for opposing inclusive language.”

Thank you to Kathy Mullaney (MA) for finding this sermon delivered at Boston University on June 17 by Robert Cummings Neville:

“But our ordinary notions of Christian virtue, even of Christian love, are closely tied up with manifesting the virtues of our own particular culture. We want everyone in the world to be like the ideals we hold for ourselves (of course, noting that we do not often live up to those ideals). The first jolt of maturation in social conscience for Christians is when we realize that other people have other ideals, and that those ideals might be far more worthy than our own. At the very least, this jolt in maturity causes us to ask whether our own sense of justice can make a good case for itself when set in fair competition with other senses of justice. The mark of immaturity about serving the needs of the world is to think that all good people are in our in-group, and the bad people are in the out-groups. The mark of first maturity is the recognition that the distinction between the in-group and out-group is a desperately wicked concept, however it might have had evolutionary staying power in primitive times.” *Robert Cummings Neville is Dean of Marsh Chapel and Chaplain of the University. He also is Professor of Philosophy,*

Religion, and Theology at the University. Dean Neville was ordained Deacon in the Methodist Church in 1963 and Elder in 1966, and is a member of the Missouri Annual Conference. For the full text of the sermon, go to <http://www.bu.edu/chapel/services/sermons/documents/061806ToGrow.doc>.

VOTF Australia continues to provide their Catholics with updates and hope. Visit their website at www.votfaustralia.org; **another site**, based in England, devoted to “changing” our Church includes some interesting reading on clericalism and other global Catholic concerns. To visit, go to www.ccc4vat2.co.uk.

Which comes first or, Can forgiveness and justice co-exist? The **eighth annual Common Ground Initiative lecture**, “Reconciliation and the Refusal to Cease Suffering” is available at <http://www.nplc.org/commonground/lecture/goizueta2006.htm>. Boston College professor of theology Robert Goizueta delivered the lecture on June 24 at Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Goizueta’s talk was directed at “an extended reflection on the theological and ethical significance of the victim’s offer of forgiveness and reconciliation to his or her oppressor.” The responder was University of Notre Dame professor Margaret Pfeil whose remarks are also available through the above site.

Letter to another editor – from fellow communicant Paul Cromidas of the Greek Orthodox tradition. Go to the Voice of Orthodox Christian Unity at <http://www.ocl.org/> for an interesting perspective on the abuse crisis from a VOTF supporter. Mr. Cromidas sent his letter “What’s Wrong With This Picture?” to the *Vineyard* for publication but the letter appeared on the OCL site recently.

DIOCESE/State Watch

Santa Rosa, CA: “State law requires priests to immediately report any suspected case of child abuse” in California. But that didn’t happen in one diocese. As June 22 *Vineyard* readers know (http://www.votf.org/vineyard/June29_2006/diocese_state_watch.html), Bishop Walsh of Santa Rosa, CA let enough time pass on an admitted abuse situation that the priest in question was able to flee the state. For an update on this story, go to <http://www1.pressdemocrat.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060704/NEWS/607040325> or go to the SNAP website at www.survivorsnetwork.org.

- VOTF North Bay, CA joined VOTF national leaders in a statement that reads in part, “It [an end to the sexual abuse crisis] also requires a commitment to reform a clerical structure so deeply entrenched in secrecy and denial that a bishop could justify in his own mind protecting a predator instead of a child.” VOTF North Bay, CA is continuing to amass signatures to the letter. Read the full letter at <http://www.votf.org/Press/pressrelease/062706letter.html>. Sign on to this letter – contact Cindy Vrooman at votfnorthbay@sbcglobal.net.
- VOTF NH’s Carolyn Disco comments briefly on “Understanding ‘Accountability’ in Santa Rosa, CA” in Commentary.

Bridgeport, CT: The *New York Times* of July 9 portrays Fr. Fay (Darien, CT – story covered in previous *Vineyards*) as a problem well before the FBI investigation now under way. Go to

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/09/nyregion/09priest.html?_r=1&oref=slogin. Also keep up to date on this story at the VOTF Bridgeport web site, www.votfbpt.org.

Boston, MA: The *Boston Herald* reports, “The Legislature’s Joint Committee on Judiciary has at last reached a reasonable compromise on the issue of extending the statute of limitations on crimes involving the sexual abuse of children – one that should be passed before lawmakers adjourn later this month. The bill reported out Friday extends that deadline another 10 years, allowing for a total of 25 years after the victim reaches age 16.” Go to <http://news.bostonherald.com/editorial/view.bg?articleid=146541>. VOTF in Massachusetts is not taking this lightly. Read “What Commitment Looks Like” and note the Sunday, July 16 gathering at the seats of four dioceses – Boston, Worcester, Springfield and Fall River.

Burlington, VT: The *Burlington Free Press* notes, “The diocese – facing 21 claims filed by people who say they were victims of abuse and having settled one case for nearly \$1 million – asked in May that Superior Court Judge Ben Joseph step down from presiding over the pending cases. Diocesan attorneys argued in court papers that Joseph has issued a spate of biased rulings against the church that necessitated the settlement and made it nearly impossible for future trials to be fair. Plaintiffs countered that Joseph’s decisions have been impartial and proper, and they accused the diocese of ‘judge shopping’ and trying to intimidate the judiciary.” Full story at <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060705/NEWS02/607050302/1007&theme=>.

New York: This update from Joseph Byrnes, VOTF Brooklyn, NY: “All is not in vain re our May 17 trip to Albany to pass legislation that would protect our children. The New York State legislature passed a bill that would require background checks and fingerprinting of all future employees in yeshivas, Catholic schools and private schools.” The coalition that went to Albany to work on legislative reforms included the following: SNAP, VOTF, Rescue and Recovery, New York Alliance against Sexual Assault, Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Program at Mount Sinai Medical Center, the Awareness Center–Abuse group in Jewish community; Orthodox Union–Yeshiva Parents Group, and Silent Lambs–Support group in Jehova Witness community.

St. Petersburg, FL: The *Florida Catholic* reports: “Sex offenders and violent criminals should have a tougher time accessing victims through church ministries. Sweeping changes have come to the diocese’s Safe Environment Program designed to protect the vulnerable. New policies implement technology that will allow the diocese access to criminal records nationwide, provide more consistent and specific safe environment training and incorporate new mandates from the revised U.S. bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Adults and new direction from the Miami Archdiocese.” See the full story at <http://www.thefloridacatholic.org/articles/2006/060623/060623-stp-protectvulnerable.htm>.

Toledo, OH: Parishioners are suing their diocese for control of parish assets. Go to <http://www.toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060628/NEWS10/60628012>.

From **VOTF Greater Cincinnati, OH**, Dick Okenfuss writes:

“Two of our Greater Cincinnati Coordinating Committee members will meet next Wednesday, July 19, with Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. We asked for this meeting in a Pentecost letter to the Archbishop where we asked what we could do to help him with his parishes and pastors.

We are hopeful that this will lead to continuing dialogue with both the Archbishop and his staff, and that he will agree with a pilot project with one or more parishes where we will attempt to assist the pastor, and staff, with projects of most importance to them.

We are testing a survey where we attempt to identify skills and experience that we can utilize in this project. If successful, we will re-energize our membership, and provide a useful service to our parishes.”

COMMENTARY

What Commitment Looks Like

This is text of a letter written by VOTF Boston Area Council and distributed to VOTF Massachusetts members.

Dear VOTF Victim and Survivor Advocates,

Please join us on Sunday, July 16, at diocesan cathedrals to support the elimination of statutes of limitation (SOL) for sex abuse crimes against children. We will be in four locations: Boston, Springfield, Fall River, and Worcester.

On Friday, June 30, a bill to reform the statute of limitations for crimes of sexual abuse to children was released from the Judiciary Committee. While the legislation released is less than what is needed (It is not the original bill we all called and emailed about), there is no doubt that what occurred happened because of our collective efforts. We should consider this a small victory in an important battle of a broader campaign.

The Judiciary Committee released a bill, H836, which increases the criminal SOL for crimes of rape and some sexual assault crimes to 25 years, making 41 years of age the maximum age that a victim of these crimes can seek judicial action. We know that this is not enough time for many victims.

This legislation has the following deficiencies:

- No repeal of SOL for civil actions
- No repeal of criminal SOL
- No extension on crimes of incest
- No extension on most crimes of sexual assault (especially age 14 and over)

The effect of this incremental approach with these exclusions is to make Massachusetts a state with less tolerance for crimes of sexual abuse to children. We still have much work to do in the next month to amend this bill to make Massachusetts a ZERO tolerance state for these crimes.

Also on Friday, Cardinal O'Malley and the three Massachusetts Bishops issued a joint statement supporting this amended bill. Some of what they said in their statement was:

“The Commonwealth’s law enforcement officials should be given the tools they need to remove sexual predators from our communities. We support the proposed increase in the criminal statute of limitation for the sexual abuse of children.” To view their full statement, [click here](#).

However, previous public statements made by the Massachusetts Catholic Conference indicated that they did not support repeal of SOL for civil actions and questioned the constitutionality of repeal of SOL for criminal prosecution, both of which are needed for a zero tolerance policy for these crimes.

The Dallas charter in 2002 demanded zero tolerance, and we should expect no less of the Massachusetts Bishops.

We ask you to join VOTF, SNAP, STTOP and other concerned citizens and stand in vigil outside the Cathedral on Sunday morning July 16 to remind the bishops of their commitment to do all they can to protect children from sexual abuse.

Support from the bishops to amend this bill to include the elimination of SOLs for all sex abuse crimes against children, both civil and criminal, could be what turns the legislature to amend and pass a complete ZERO Tolerance bill this session.

Please join us on the 16th. We will be handing out fliers to churchgoers in a respectful manner. The following week marks the fourth anniversary of our historic First National VOTF Conference in Boston. We committed ourselves to insisting that the Church do all it can to protect children then, and we need to keep insisting, while there are just days left to get legislation passed in Massachusetts.

Times and locations are below. Call a friend: not everyone reads his or her email. And, once again, thank you for all your actions to support the protection of children. Without your continued support we would not have come this far. *Boston Area Council*

Places and Times:

- Boston, Cathedral of the Holy Cross, 11 am (Mass starts at 11:30 am)
- Springfield, St. Michael's Cathedral, 254 State St., 9:30 am (Mass starts at 10 am)
- Worcester, St. Paul's Cathedral, 9:30 am (Mass starts at 10:15am) 15 Chatham St.
- Fall River, St. Mary's Cathedral, 327 Second St., 9:30 am (Mass starts at 10 am)

Comment from Jetta Bernier, executive director of Massachusetts Citizens for Children, in response to those proposals [above]. “The proposed changes would exclude victims of incest, those who were abused after age 13, and those who were sexually abused but not raped. Additionally the Chairman has given no indication he intends to act on the bill that would repeal the statute of limitation for civil actions against sexual predators, which is the only means by which 95% of victims have to seek justice. Experiences of 31 other states do not support his expressed caution about potential problems with constitutional issues and judicial procedures.”

{Jetta Bernier's remarks appeared in an update from the Coalition to Reform Sex Abuse Laws. Their web site is www.stopsexcrime.org.}

Understanding “Accountability” in Santa Rosa, CA

Carolyn Disco, VOTF New Hampshire

Mandatory reporting is widely ignored by prosecutors who sidestep the issue – Cardinal George violated Illinois law with no legal consequences; Bishop Walsh in Santa Rosa, the same – and we do not press for the law to be enforced, never mind even have charges investigated. I call that deference. Bishops of course did not mean to...never intended...etc, etc., when the real question is: Did they abide by the law or not? Intent is negated by actions that contradict it.

A column written by a local CA reporter about Santa Rosa said the law requires abuse to be reported “immediately or as soon as is practically possible by telephone.” She added, “Instead of calling Child Protective Services, the bishop apparently waited a day and called his lawyer, Dan Galvin. Galvin then waited two days before sending a fax to CPS,” and another day before alerting police. There are phones to reach CPS and the police 24/7. A priest who knew Ochoa's whereabouts before Ochoa crossed the border, just told him to rest up and come back. Bishop Walsh said he did not think Ochoa was a flight risk. That is not for him to decide.

When will we speak up for genuine accountability, even if it means criminal investigations and prosecutions of bishops? The next time, or maybe the time after that, or perhaps even a third or fourth case? I want to start keeping count, and report back in a year. I keep thinking of the victim/survivors and where they are right now, tonight, as they see so few exercised about criminal violations. Bishops continue to get away with everything under the law, just like before, only this time we know about it.

BOOK NOTES

The Democracy of God: An American Catholicism by Robert J. Willis is published by iUniverse, Inc. and is available at amazon.com.

Crisis grips the American Catholic community and, for many, its future hangs in the balance. Current leaders fixate on two plans. In one they march steadfastly into the past, pursuing the illusion of a remnant group of the righteous armored by uniformity, a sorry substitute for a religious community. In another they resolutely protect the status quo. Before the eyes of an incredulous people they are transforming the Church into a museum of religious artifacts, a fitting destination for inquisitive tourists, occasional visitors, and the uninvolved.

There is a third alternative. Calling upon the democratic attempts of John Carroll and John England, the incisive comments of Tocqueville about religion in a democracy, and the theology of Vatican II, he challenges bishops to forsake their status as minor lords in a medieval monarchy and, instead, to embrace a servant leadership within the People of God.

Robert J. Willis was a Jesuit from 1953-1972, holds master's degrees in philosophy and theology, and a doctorate in psychology. He has documented these years as a Catholic religious and priest in his recently published *Breaking the Chains: A Catholic Memoir* (iUniverse, July 2005). For more detailed information, visit the author's website at robertjwillis.com.

LETTER to the editor

“Gaile Pohlhaus's account of being denied admission to the bishops' meeting [*In the Vineyard*, June 29, “Banging a Drum in LA”] should hardly surprise us; in fact, it is absolutely in keeping with the Church leadership's arrogant, out of touch attitude.

What is important is that VOTF and others publicize these actions so that all Catholics can better appreciate where they stand in relation to their Church. In effect, ‘we the Church’ are peons. We contribute absolutely everything the Church has or has ever had, yet the Church pays less than no attention to our calls for reform and recognition of the terrible injustices of the recent past.

How the Church can focus on trivial changes to the text of the Mass, while simultaneously trying to avoid taking any responsibility for the widespread sexual abuse among members of its own clergy (including some bishops), is simply beyond belief, and is certainly way beyond anything that Christ ever taught.

As I read Gail Pohlhaus's account, it reinforced a decision I had made some time ago to stop attending Mass, this from a one-time daily communicant, Eucharistic Minister and director of a hospital ministry. I simply had gotten to the point where I could no longer stand the hypocritical attitude and pronouncements coming forth from every level of the Church's hierarchy. Attending Mass became a study in anger and frustration. Not attending Mass has brought me closer to God, closer to prayer and closer to my fellow

human beings.

I am a Hospice Volunteer and contribute to a wide range of charitable causes. Actually, since leaving the Church, I feel clean and at peace. I still consider myself a Catholic, and when the hierarchy of the Catholic Church really starts paying attention to the teachings of Christ, then I will be pleased to reinvolve myself.

My path has evolved in a natural and peaceful way – from skepticism to disillusionment to separation. The whole process has taken about five years and I cannot believe that I am alone on this journey. I will continue to support VOTF because I see it as the best hope for reform; hardly a day goes by that I don't think of VOTF and Martin Luther.

VOTF has played an extremely helpful role in helping me resolve a number of conflicting issues and for this I will be forever grateful. You are doing good and important work and I urge you to continue reporting what is really going on. Over the years, I have always found you to be fair and impartial, but more importantly, you reflect the spirit of Christ. In a way, I have left the Catholic Church and have joined the Church of VOTF because I respect you and I respect your objectives.

VOTF is up to the challenge and you are worthy of all the support you can muster.” *Peter von Raits, Santa Barbara, CA*