

In the Vineyard

June 29, 2006

“To date, what has been missing in all of this is the lay voice. It's just not in the process.”
Bishop Donald Trautman (Erie, PA), chair of the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy, speaking to NCR's John Allen following recent approval by bishops of liturgical language changes.

We're happy to report our votf.org domain name is back. The registration had expired without our knowledge or any direct notice. The contact name has since been updated and the domain name has been renewed for several years. Our web site is now accessible via votf.org, votf.net and voiceofthefaithful.org. Emails can be sent to the national VOTF staff/volunteer person's name at either @votf.org or @votf.net, for example rjoyce@votf.org.

In this issue:

VOTF National/Int'l News: VOTF National Representative Council (NRC) June 2-4 Chicago meeting - SOL (statutes of limitations) report delivered by Frank Douglas, Region 13; new representatives elected to NRC – see updated contact list for Regions 14 and 2 [here](#); [Campaign for Accountability Update](#) – new information and new support; VOTF in Australia news coverage at Catholic Online – read more [here](#); change of leadership for Goal 2 (support for priests of integrity), click [here](#). [Affiliate News Update](#) from international area coordinator Mary Ann Keyes (who is also area coordinator for Alaska, and parts of Florida and New York).

SURVIVOR Community News – Survivors Quilt displayed during the USCCB meeting; SNAP conference to draw record numbers including VOTF; Cecelia Project under way; Tom Doyle DVD available.

VOTF 2004 Priest of Integrity Award recipient Fr. James Scahill (East Longmeadow, MA) speaks out *again*, with courage *again*. See [Site-Seeing, Etc.](#)

USCCB Los Angeles, CA meeting and VOTF – different messages and a different presence; private Mass for bishops leaves lay Catholics literally on the street – our very own Gaile Pohlhaus was there; read more in Commentary – “Banging a Drum in LA” and “The people are leading; will the leaders follow?”

Note Site-Seeing, Etc. below: St. Anthony Messenger and Op-Ed News.com published comments on the USCCB meeting; Common Ground Initiative to host anniversary lecture by Cardinal George; and more.

Diocese/State Watch: California is in the spotlight: in **Sonoma, CA**, Bishop Daniel Walsh of the **Diocese of Santa Rosa, CA**, is defending his handling of a priest accused of abuse. The priest subsequently “fled” the state; in **Los Angeles and Orange, CA**, diocesan screenings for abusers will not cover illegal immigrant Catholics who can volunteer with children without background checks since they lack the required ID; Elsewhere: **Spokane, WA** – a federal court has ruled that the diocese does not own its parishes; **Oregon** federal judge has ruled that sex abuse lawsuit against the Vatican can move forward; cautious optimism in **Boston** – the Apostolic Signatura has advised

vigiling parishes that they will not be closed until their appeals are heard in Rome; **Bridgeport, CT's** astounding tale of reckless financial "management" in a Darien parish is a cautionary tale for all Catholic parishes; and Excommunication Update.

What do you think – of the bishops' approval of language changes in our liturgy? Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, Pa., chair of the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy, told *NCR's* John Allen, "To date, what has been missing in all of this is the lay voice. It's just not in the process. Some bishops on their own have sought it out, but at least formally it's missing. In the United States, we have outstanding scholars in liturgical theology, and we should be using these experts. That needs to be done for the next steps." See *National Catholic Reporter*, June 23 posting at <http://www.nationalcatholicreporter.org/word/word062306.htm>.

Commentary –

"Lay ministry and ministry of the laity – what's the difference?"

"The people are leading; will the leaders follow?" – an overview

Site-Seeing, Etc.

- From *St. Anthony Messenger* at <http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Jul2006/Editorial.asp> "US Bishops Must Follow Through": "*Distressing* is the first reaction to the third audit measuring how well U.S. dioceses have implemented provisions of the 2002 *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. This audit raises questions for two reasons: The rate of full compliance actually went down, and one diocese and one eparchy refused to participate."
- OpEd News.com (http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_debby_bo_060620_22what_happened_to_th.htm) published "What Happened to the Bishops?" from Debby Bodkin of www.catholics4justice.com. An excerpt from Debby's excellent consideration of the USCCB meeting: "A Survivors Quilt with hundreds of pictures of clergy sex abuse survivors was handmade and placed on display for the Bishops to view sometime during the three days they were in Los Angeles. Yes, an invitation was delivered with the hope of some type of dialog or communication with Church Bishops and leaders. However, not one Bishop, of the approximate 300 Bishops attending the USCCB conference, found the time to walk across the street to view the Survivors Quilt, meet the survivors, supporters and families that anxiously awaited a visit from one of the Bishops. What happened to the Bishops?"
- **VOTF 2004 Priest of Integrity Award recipient** Fr. James Scahill (East Longmeadow, MA) speaks out *again*, with courage *again*. Read Fr. Scahill's letter to the editor in the June 25 *Republican* at <http://www.masslive.com/search/index.ssf?/base/news-0/115113573098160.xml?onle>. In part, the letter reads, "Why are the churches of all denominations so silent on the possibility of legislation that would better

protect our young and hold more accountable their abusers and enablers? What could be more pro-life than the better protection of children?” and, “Instead of addressing this issue, at the recent convocation of bishops in Los Angeles, its main achievement was to change certain familiar prayers so that they would better approximate their Latin translation. Hollywood could not produce a more tragic comedy of errors.”

- **HEADS UP!** Cardinal George will deliver a lecture in Chicago “The Role of Dialogue in the Life of the Diocesan Church” on **August 11** at Loyola University, Chicago, IL. It is sponsored by the National Pastoral Life Center to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Cardinal Bernardin’s Catholic Common Ground Initiative. Given the recent breakdown of the USCCB Charter and VOTF’s subsequent meeting with the Cardinal, the gathering promises to shed some light on the common ground of dialogue. Watch www.nplc.org for details.
 - The National Pastoral Life Center (www.nplc.org) is the guardian of Cardinal Bernardin’s legacy, the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. Their current quarterly newsletter *Initiative Report* recaps the Initiative’s annual conference held in March; the gathering was devoted to an assessment of the Initiative as it approaches its 10th anniversary (in August). The questions asked, the ensuing dialogue noted, and the talk delivered by Sr. Mary Forman are recommended reading for VOTF members. *Initiative Report* is free; to subscribe, send your name and mailing address to commonground@nplc.org.
- The BishopAccountability.org web site has had a superb facelift; visit www.bishop-accountability.org.
- From the current issue of *America* magazine: “Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., [a convert from the Presbyterian tradition], said his journey to the faith has been a ‘wonderful adventure’ and expressed hope that Anglicans received into the full communion of the Catholic Church will enrich their new church with their Anglican traditions.” That may prove difficult given the other news in *America* – Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has warned the Church of England that a move to ordain women as bishops would destroy any chance of full unity with the Catholic and Orthodox churches. If the Church of England adopted such a resolution, the ‘shared partaking of the one Lord’s table, which we long for so earnestly, would disappear into the far and ultimately unreachable distance.’
- Timeless reading in *National Catholic Reporter*, June 16: “Spin without end in abuse scandal” responds to the Catholic League’s remarks in a *New York Times* ad. Subscribers can access the editorial at http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006b/061606/061606w.htm. VOTF also responded on our [web site](#).

- The current **Boisi Center Report** is a publication of Boston College's Boisi Center for Religious and American Public Life. The May 2006 issue (it is published twice a year) summarized a talk delivered March 15th by Ann Braude, director of Harvard University's Women's Studies in Religion Program, "Faith of the Feminists: Religion in the National Organization for Women." Braude's presentation "explored the ways in which religions was both absent from and an important part of the creation of NOW." To receive the report or to read it on line, go to www.bc.edu/boisi.
 - A **Women's Justice Coalition** is about to assemble a nationwide report card on the status of women in US dioceses. The coalition includes all organizations that support the equality of women in the Catholic Church, inclusive of women's ordination. For more information, email cs@quixote.org or visit www.quixote.org/cso.

QUOTE for our time: "The chaos that happened in the Diocese of Bridgeport could happen in any diocese and it happened in one of the richest communities in the northeast and the Darien, CT, parish has both a parish council and a finance council. Does this not show the need for structural change in the Church?" VOTF member *Joe Byrnes*; see more on this story in *Diocese/State Watch* in this issue and the May 4 issue.

Editor's Note: Apologies to all of our June 8 *Vineyard* readers for the misprinted date of death for Sr. Jeannette Normandin who died on May 30 (not tomorrow June 30, as stated). In the mix of offers of employment from bettors, fortune tellers and obit writers, came this message from a priest: "You must have been very fond of the good sister to keep her with us another month." Humor is always appreciated.

Commentary

The people are leading; will the leaders follow?

Let us know what you think at pthorp.ed@votf.org

Consider these six efforts, all of them played out within the last month:

Los Angeles, CA: 1) VOTF National secretary Gaile Pohlhaus wanted to attend Mass while in Los Angeles for the USCCB meeting in early June. 2) VOTF National media manager John Moynihan was also in LA for the USCCB meeting and wanted the bishops to have a copy of the VOTF letter to Pope Benedict XVI. 3) Prof. James Kelly of Fordham University in New York City was in Los Angeles, invited by the conference, for a meeting on the yet-unfunded "Causes and Context" study; the study was commissioned by the bishops in 2002 to examine the conditions that produced so many predator priests and so many sexually abused children.

4) In Richmond, VA: While the bishops and others were gathering in Los Angeles, Lynn Allgeier was continuing her pursuit of background information on a new priest in her parish as well as parish financial data.

5) In Yakima, Washington, Robert Fontana continued to pursue a wrongful termination case he filed against the diocese where he was employed as director of evangelism; Fontana's attorney maintains that his client "was forced to leave his job because he was critical of how the diocese was applying its policy on clergy sexual misconduct with vulnerable people."

6) In Newark, NJ, (noted in a letter to the *Newark Star Ledger*, June 16) VOTF members of Union County visited the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart on June 3 to pray for the priests of the archdiocese. Members have been doing this in a different church in the archdiocese on the first Saturday of the month since last year.

Consider these six outcomes:

Los Angeles, CA: 1) Gaile Pohlhaus was barred from the Mass (see more below, "Banging a Drum in LA") as it was "private." 2) John Moynihan slipped the letter beneath nearly 600 hotel doors in the wee hours of the morning, knowing this was the only way he could get the letter to the bishops. 3) Professor James Kelly was wondering where all the meeting attendees were when John appeared at his door. John had discovered a small sign indicating a suite number for a "Causes and Content Study" meeting. The sign was not only mislabeled (it's "context" not "content") but it was tucked away in an area of the Biltmore hotel designated for the bishops' vendors.

4) In Richmond, VA, NBC12 News and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported that Lynn Allgeier was escorted from her church, St. James in Hopewell, VA, by police officers after several weeks of inquiries about a new priest in the parish. The pastor, Fr. Frank Wiggins, had sent her a letter indicating that she was no longer welcome in the church but answering none of her questions about his background and parish finances. Allgeier felt obliged to know more about the priest because "we have lived in the diocese of Richmond for over 20 years, and in those 20 years, every diocese we've belonged to has had a pedophile priest." When reporters contacted the Richmond diocese, they were told that any priest has the right to refuse a parishioner. (See more in Diocese/State Watch.)

5) In Yakima, WA, the *Yakima Herald Republic* had been tracking the story of a former employee of the Catholic Diocese of Yakima who waited ten months for a response to his lawsuit alleging he was wrongfully discharged from his diocesan job. Robert Fontana filed his suit in August 2005. Fontana's suit contended "that Fontana was forced to leave his job because he was critical of how the diocese was applying its policy on clergy sexual misconduct with vulnerable people. 'I have no doubt Robert was a thorn in their side, but what he was trying to do was right. The bishop didn't want to hear it,' Fontana's attorney said. Fontana said he was reprimanded twice at work in 2004 for questioning how the diocese was handling the case of a priest being investigated by the FBI and the

county prosecutor's office on possession of child pornography. Both agencies ultimately declined to file charges.” The priest in question was sent away for therapy, returned to another parish, and is currently on sabbatical.

The paper also noted VOTF Yakima Dan Thibault’s concern that “the diocese didn't follow its own policy in allowing the priest to minister while still under investigation for possible possession of child pornography.”

Nonetheless, a May 10 posting in the *Yakima Herald Republic* reported, “A lawsuit accusing the Catholic Diocese of Yakima of forcing an employee to quit has been thrown out by a judge as a constitutional violation of the separation of church and state. Robert Fontana sued the church last year, claiming he was forced to quit for complaining about Bishop Carlos Sevilla's handling of allegations against a priest who was suspected of downloading photographs of nude.” Go to [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=YHRB&p_theme=yhrb&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_dispstring=Robert%20Fontana&p_field_advanced-0=&p_text_advanced-0=\("Robert%20Fontana"\)&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=YHRB&p_theme=yhrb&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&s_dispstring=Robert%20Fontana&p_field_advanced-0=&p_text_advanced-0=("Robert%20Fontana")&xcal_numdocs=20&p_perpage=10&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no).

6) In Newark, NJ, VOTF members were met at church doors “by armed sheriff’s officers who cautioned us that we were not to hand out material in the cathedral (though we were not doing so). In conversation, it became clear that they were [there] in response to our visit.”

Lest we need more than the abuse of thousands of children by priests and what appears to be a systematic cover-up by bishops, here we have indications that what brought our Church into this era of disgrace is still operative. That’s the bad news.

But there’s good news (the very definition of “gospel”), too. Some might think that one employee in one diocese or one parishioner in one church or one reform organization at one gathering, does not seem to be the “stuff” of sea change or even the “stuff” of significance. But let’s think again – in all of these vignettes, a lay Catholic is speaking out, acting out of faith lived, and effecting a considerable shift away from how “things used to be.” If we believe, as we say, that “we are the Church,” then our ordained brothers, indeed all Catholics, are being carried along on a ride the bishops certainly didn’t choose. What happens to one—most especially the survivors—happens to all of us as One Body in Christ. The people are leading; will the leaders follow? What do you think? Please share your thoughts; write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Banging a Drum in LA

[VOTF secretary Gaile Pohlhaus provided this journal entry from one of her days in Los Angeles during the USCCB meeting. Gaile was with VOTF president Mary Pat Fox and VOTF media manager John Moynihan.]

The bishops were scheduled for a 5 p.m. Mass at the Cathedral later in the day. Feeling the need for solitude (and thinking an early arrival might be good), I took myself down to the Cathedral a little after 3 p.m. What a surprise met me. All the entrances to the cathedral were covered by solid wooden partitions. I went to the adjacent parking garage where I saw others going in and asked for admittance. "The Cathedral is closed today ma'am." "But there is to be a Mass at 5 o'clock," I said. "There's no Mass scheduled," came the reply. I persisted, "I know the bishops have a five o'clock Mass and I would like to go." He said, "It's private, ma'am." At this point I'd had it. "Canon law says there can be no such thing as a private Mass!" (The proscription is there by implication in Canons 906 and 912 on Eucharistic celebrations.) "We're just here for security, ma'am." I opened my bag: no guns, a book about the Church, cell phone, wallet and rosary beads. "Sorry ma'am, you need ID." I showed my Villanova ID. "A ticket, ma'am." Reluctantly I turned away. I knew I could not jump over the fence on the far side because I would drop right onto the freeway.

Across the street from the Cathedral are the county offices for Los Angeles (public property). After awhile members from the memorial tent came by with the quilts they had made, each depicting the faces of survivors. At one point there were ten police vehicles but we couldn't be removed from a public building so we stood (I sat on the wall) and held the quilts, and banged a bass drum rhythmically for about two hours."*

“Lay ministry” and “ministry of the laity” – what’s the difference?

What is your understanding of your ministry? Write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

“Easy Essay on the Laity” – The Catholic-Labor Network at www.catholiclabor.org is carrying the text below. It was originally published in *Initiatives*, National Center for the Laity newsletter at <http://www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm>.

All Christians are called to *ministry of the laity*; not all, however, are invited to *lay ministry*. Lay ministry is conferred by commission; ministry of the laity begins at baptism.

The field for the ministry of the laity is society; lay ministry, however, finds its place in the Church.

The locations for lay ministers are sacristy, sanctuary, vestibule; the areas for the ministry of the laity are job, family and neighborhood.

Lay ministers help proclaim God’s word; ministry of the laity shows how to live it. Lay ministers help distribute the Body of Christ; ministry of the laity helps us to become it.

Upon leaving the church [building], lay ministers start exercising the ministry of the laity. You don’t have to be a doctor to be concerned about health or a lawyer to be concerned about the law. So too, you don’t have to be a lay minister to be involved in ministry of the laity. *Msgr. Walter Niebrzydowski, New York, NY*

More on lay ministries

National Catholic Reporter June 15: To read the bishops' statement on lay ministries "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord" (November 2005) go to <http://www.usccb.org/laity/laymin/> (you can also order copies at this link); for "Theologian calls bishops' lay ministry doctrine best in field", go to <http://nationalcatholicreporter.org/update/bn061406.htm>.

SURVIVOR Community Notes

At the USCCB meeting in LA this month, survivor Erin Brady displayed a Survivors' Quilt that took her six months to stitch. The quilt's story is at <http://www.pasadenaweekly.com/article.php?id=3538&IssueNum=24>.

SNAP's national conference July 21-23 in Jersey City may be their largest ever. Watch their website at www.snapnetwork.org for details. VOTF president Mary Pat Fox will address the gathering and VOTF will have a booth at the conference, as well as a breakout session for area members and newcomers. VOTF secretary Gaile Pohlhaus will also attend the conference.

The **Cecelia Project** sets survivors' pain to music. Read more in the June 8 *Vineyard* and at www.ceceliaproject.org; Tom Doyle's much acclaimed talk in Tucson, AZ is available on DVD. [Click here.](#)

AFFILIATE News Update

from area coordinator Mary Ann Keyes

NEWS FROM OUTSIDE THE "LOWER 48"

June 22, 2006: For whatever reason, the summer solstice or the sheer thrill of a change in seasons, my computer and phone has been buzzing with news of VOTF in Alaska, Australia and Puerto Rico today.

It wasn't hard to convince Svea Fraser, who was heading to Seward, AK to rejoin her husband Scott for another leg of their sailing adventure, that she had to go a little early, stay with and visit friends of mine, see Alaska through their eyes and through faith sharing spread the word about VOTF. I had lived there for a year in the 90s and knew my Catholic friends to be warm, welcoming and open to the movement of the Spirit in their lives. I just spoke with her and the meeting with VOTF members and friends was about to begin. I'm sure Svea will have a report for us before she is under sail again.

Then, this morning I had the pleasure of hearing from one of our long time leaders in Australia. Although 12:30 in the morning there, he was full of enthusiasm about VOTF,

but most anxious to set up a conference call in early July to get others involved and grow the movement.

This afternoon, I heard from a member in Puerto Rico, who wants to meet with other members with the idea of starting an affiliate!

And so, VOTF lives on and continues to grow. Those seeds, when nurtured, bring new life to the movement. To share the stories of life in our church from one corner of the globe to the other has been a privilege for me as an area coordinator.

DIOCESE/State Watch

California: On June 22, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “not wanting to lose illegal immigrant volunteers, the Los Angeles and Orange Roman Catholic dioceses have quietly backed away from a pledge to root out pedophiles by running fingerprint background checks on anyone who works with children. The revamped policy in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles allows church volunteer candidates without government-issued identification to give instead a sworn affidavit stating that they have not been convicted of any crime. In Orange, potential volunteers without photo IDs can submit a sworn affidavit and two letters of reference attesting to their character.” For the full story, go to <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-fingerprint22jun22,1,3526623.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california>.

- From the *Press Democrat*, “Santa Rosa Bishop Daniel Walsh failed to file a timely report with authorities about possible child abuse by a priest who may have used the delay to flee the country, officials said.” In the same article, “The *Dallas Morning News* reported in 2004 that dozens of priests who no longer are eligible to work in the United States have found sanctuary abroad and are working in settings that bring them into contact with children.” For the full story, go to <http://www1.pressdemocrat.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060622/NEWS/606220302/1033/NEWS01>. See VOTF press release [here](#) and visit VOTF Northern California’s web site at www.votf-sf.org.
- *National Catholic Reporter*, June 16, noted an Orange, CA pastor who wrote in the parish bulletin that parishioners who kneel instead of stand during the Agnus Dei are committing a “mortal sin” and that the act of doing so is one of rebellion. The diocese then printed a retraction (www.rcbo.org) concluding, “The bulletin article by Fr. Tran was never about ‘kneeling’ or ‘standing’ during Mass, it was about respect for the liturgical practices of the Church as approved by the Pope.”

Oregon: From Catholic Online: “A federal judge ruled June 7, 2006, that a sex-abuse lawsuit against the Vatican can move forward with its claim that the Holy See was responsible for the activities of a priest who was transferred from a number of dioceses in the 1960s.” Go to http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=20119.

VOTF Bridgeport, CT: The Darien, CT beat goes on. See recent coverage in the *Darien Times* at

http://www.acorn-online.com/news/publish/article_7398.shtml; if you need to get caught up, check the May 4 and June 8 issues of the *Vineyard*.

The *Stamford Advocate* reports details of the priest's spending habits over some years – go to <http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/local/scn-sa-priest2jun18,0,5521249.story>; and a warning for parishioners everywhere, “Church scandal occurred too easily” at <http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/opinion/editorial/scn-sa-editorial1jun20,0,2217139.story>.

Also note the VOTF Bridgeport, CT web site at www.bpt.org and the Bridgeport diocesan web site at www.bridgeportdiocese.com.

Spokane, WA: A U.S. court ruled that parishes in the Spokane diocese are not owned by the bishop and, therefore, cannot be sold to resolve abuse claims. Bishop Skylstad believes the decision will accelerate mediation efforts to settle those claims. For more details, go to Catholic Online at http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=20237 ; Associated Press coverage in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* at http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_WA_Church_Abuse_Spokane.html says that parishes might still be asked to help settle abuse claims. For one more perspective, go to Examiner.com at http://www.examiner.com/a-151418~Judge_Spokane_Bishop_Can_t_Sell_Parishes.html.

Bob Hailey, co-chairman of Spokane's Association of Parishes, said parishes are not opposed to contributing to the settlements. "We objected to the concept of holding parish properties hostage, so that if we fail to meet goals, we lose our churches," Hailey said. "The parishes are innocent victims just as much as those who were abused. Whatever settlement is reached needs to be a settlement that doesn't create a whole new class of victims: the people in the pews." (from the VOTF Boston Area Council newsletter)

Richmond, VA: Because she asked one too many questions about the background of a new priest and church finances in her Hopewell, VA parish, Lynn Allgeier has been banned from her church. According to Channels 12 and 8 News, the attorney for the diocese said that parishioners are not entitled to such information. See more in this issue at Commentary – “The people are leading; will the leaders follow?”; also, see <http://www.wric.com/Global/story.asp?s=4973966>; and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* at http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD%2FMGArticle%2FRTD_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1137836443434&path=!news&s=1045855934842.

VOTF Boston, MA: From the Boston Area Council newsletter, “good” news: “BACVOTF representatives will be meeting with Cardinal O'Malley this summer. We hope that it will be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue about issues of common interest.

The Council of Parishes has informed us that the Apostolic Signatura in Rome has suspended the suppression decree for all seven vigiling parishes while their appeals are

under review. While this decision is a procedural one, it does indicate that the appeals have merit. The churches involved are: Our Lady of Lourdes in Revere, Star of the Sea in Quincy, Infant Jesus-Saint Lawrence in Brookline, Saint James in Wellesley, Saint Jeremiah in Framingham, Saint Anselm in Sudbury, and Saint Frances Cabrini in Scituate.

Mary Beth Carmody, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee, said yesterday that the suspension means the archdiocese cannot sell the parishes' property until the appeals are complete. 'It doesn't guarantee success, but it's a very positive development,' she said. (Her) parish has asked the diocese to assign a priest to them."

Dover, DE: The House Judiciary Committee voted 7-0 to release a substitute bill that would extend the civil statute of limitations in cases of child sexual abuse by an adult. Delaware law now gives victims two years after the abuse to file suit. The substitute for House Bill 450 would give victims 25 years after they turn 18 to file suit. It also would specifically include public institutions among those that could be sued. The substitute bill removes a provision for a two-year window. The story appeared in delawareonline at <http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060614/NEWS/60614025>.

Excommunication Update: Lincoln, Nebraska Catholics noted the 10th anniversary this month of their bishop's (Fabian Bruskewitz) wholesale excommunication of every dissenter and dissenting reform organization he could think of, most prominently Call to Action. A June 16 *National Catholic Reporter* editorial found a silver lining on the Bruskewitz cloud: "Ultimately, he [Bruskewitz] will be a tiny footnote in the history of the U.S. Church. And long after, Call to Action and a host of other lay groups and the thinking and debate and ministry they have provoked and nourished, will continue to be a major part of the conversation in this resilient community."

- **Remember St. Stanislaus Kostka** parish in St. Louis, MO? Parishioners there were excommunicated, too. Below is Michael Scully's update.

"Just before Christmas, Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis, MO, excommunicated members of St. Stanislaus parish for their 'sin of disobedience' – they refused to hand over parish property and assets to him. Burke further declared that anyone attending Mass or receiving sacraments at St. Stan's is committing 'mortal sin.' As a result, the parish, which holds 450 people, was flooded by over 2,000 worshipers defiantly celebrating the birth of Christ at Christmas midnight Mass.

Although Burke continues to refuse sacraments to anyone associated with St. Stan's (including a dying, elderly man who was refused last rites), parish membership and participation have **more than doubled** since Burke's actions. New members include many lapsed Catholics coming back to the faith. Surely the Holy Spirit is working among the outcasts of St. Stan's!

St. Stan's pastor, Fr. Marek Bozek, responded to the charge of disobedience. 'There are three other values higher than obedience: justice, truth, charity,' he said. 'Authority and

obedience need to serve these three values. If any authority demands of you obedience that would be unjust, untruthful, uncharitable, you - as a Catholic - not only can be disobedient, but should be disobedient.' And remember that St. Thomas Aquinas famously said, '*Better to die excommunicated than to live in violation of one's conscience*'.

Check out St. Stan's website: <http://www.StanislausKostka.com>. Click the American flag from the homepage (for English version). Many articles of interest are located in the 'Our Church in the Media' link on the left menu. Here we see a Catholic parish community thriving and growing in part because it is willing to obey a Higher Authority.' *Michael Scully, VOTF Parkway, MA*