

In the Vineyard

May 22, 2008

In this issue: Bishop Geoffrey Robinson is in the U.S. and speaking out – and so is his Archdiocesan leadership, followed by Cardinal Mahony in LA, Bishop Robinson himself, and VOTF (see “The Bishop Confronts Power; the Magisterium Confronts the Bishop”); VOTF Priest Support Working Group made good company in Orlando FL (see PSWG follow-up); Sr. Mulkerrin has died – her legacy is the voice she used to sound the alarm on behalf of protecting children from clergy sexual abuse, six years before those crimes were revealed by the *Boston Globe* (see Commentary “Sister of Integrity”); Vermont’s recent clergy abuse jury verdict of \$8.7 million in damages is a story that astonishes from beginning to end (see DIOCESE/State Watch); 10 easy things *you* can do to support survivors; *Vineyard* editorial change (see VOTF Office Notes)

DIOCESE/State Watch

The case for lay vigilance could not be made clearer than in this story behind Vermont’s recent \$8.7 jury verdict in a recent clergy abuse trial. It is a story about one abuser priest and the ping-pong way various dioceses considered his “problem” until he finally wound up in Vermont – a practicing priest, after decades of allegations, admissions and sporadic treatment. See

<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080518/NEWS/87522494>.

- And yet, the diocese of Vermont is weighing an appeal. See SNAP’s reaction at <http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080520/NEWS04/805200373>. Enter the judge in the case and a \$10 million lien on diocesan property. That story is at <http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/east/2008/05/20/90173.htm>.
- The Bishop of the Burlington VT diocese, Salvatore Matano, wrote an open letter to parishioners. See <http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080519/NEWS/80519027>.
- The *Rutland Herald* “Opinion” page identified a stunning, common thread in these cases: “The most disquieting element of all was the lack of concern evidenced by the church hierarchy with the welfare of the children who were abused.” <http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080518/OPINION01/805180308/1018/OPINION>.

AFFILIATE Notes

Nashua VOTF Meeting with NH Attorney General

Pat Gomez, NRC representative Region 1, sent the following message:

On Monday May 19, 2008, at 7 PM, the New Hampshire Attorney General, Kelley Ayotte addressed a public meeting sponsored by the Nashua Area VOTF. At the meeting AG Ayotte reviewed the third Independent Audit of the Dioceses of Manchester compliance program for the protection of its young people from sexual molestation. AG Ayotte also discussed future State audit plans for the Diocese, and answered questions pertaining to the audit findings and recommendations. [Watch for a more-detailed re-cap of this meeting in an upcoming *Vineyard*.]

SURVIVOR Support Notes

Olan Horne, a survivor who met with the Pope during the papal visit to the U.S., is available for speaking engagements at VOTF affiliates. Olan will be in Santa Barbara CA shortly. A New Englander, Olan has spoken to many VOTF affiliates in the region. If your affiliate would like to hear Olan, he can be reached at olanhorne@hotmail.com.

SNAP Support Opportunity: Take out an ad in the SNAP Support Survivors Ad Book by June 15. The proceeds subsidize the upcoming national conference, allowing more survivors to attend and benefit from a wide range of speakers and breakout sessions at the best possible price. Contact Barbara Dorris at snapdorris@gmail.com or visit www.snapnetwork.org.

David Biersmith, VOTF Rep. Region 9, compiled the following easy actions to support survivors:

1. Walk a line with a banner/ poster in support of our causes.
2. Ask your pastor if you can be a member of the Finance Committee.
3. Ask your Diocese who are the members of their oversight committee on sexual abuse.
4. Ask if you can be a member of that committee.
5. If you have a school connected to your parish, ask about their “no touch” policy.
6. Ask the religious order that taught you in high school what policy is in place on behalf of the sexually abused.
7. Write a letter to the Religious Editor of the local paper on your thoughts for a follow-up to the Papal visit.
8. Call and/or conduct a VOTF meeting for your friends, neighbors, colleagues.
9. Show one of the many films available about our causes.
10. Invite the diocesan person handling sexual abuse to speak at a meeting.

PRIESTS' Support Working Group Notes

Picking up from John Ryan's report in the last issue, Svea Fraser continues coverage of the National Ministry Summit held in Orlando FL. See [Priest Support Working Group](#).

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

July 22 is the Feast of the once-maligned/now-restored Mary Magdala. Communities all over the world have followed the lead of FutureChurch in commemorating this apostle. For information on organizing your own service, visit www.futurechurch.org.

- While you're there, consider taking a few seconds to send a postcard to the Vatican urging women's participation in the upcoming Synod on the Word. You will find the postcard at <http://www.futurechurch.org/watw/postcards/>. You MAY have already sent a postcard to *your* bishop; this time, your post card will go to Rome.

So, is liberal Catholicism dead? Read one perspective at <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1737323,00.html?imw=Y>

Victims Await Vatican Response

"It's been almost a month since Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States. The most memorable moment of his tour came when the Pope met with victims of abuse by priests in Massachusetts. That unannounced meeting and Benedict's comments on clergy abuse have raised hopes in the survivor community that the Vatican would change how it handles the issue." <http://www.wbur.org/news/2008/7/13/20080512.asp>

On the heels of a compassionate visit with survivors of clergy sexual abuse, Pope Benedict's management style raises questions: "Pope Benedict XVI named St. Louis Archbishop Raymond Burke to two Vatican offices Tuesday, increasing Burke's already prominent stature in Rome. Burke, a canon lawyer by training, was one of eight cardinals and archbishops worldwide who Benedict named to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, which interprets canon, or church, law." <http://tinyurl.com/6a85lu> (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*)

Most readers will be familiar with Abp. Burke, who is locked in a heated battle with Fr. Marek Bozek over the latter's pastoral care of St. Stanislaus Kostka parish. But far fewer have heard of his alleged handling of clergy sexual abuse allegations. One wonders if the Pope is aware of what the *Riverfront Times* reports at <http://www.riverfronttimes.com/2004-08-25/news/immaculate-deception/5>.

Company coming? The director of the Vatican Observatory, Rev. Jose Gabriel Funes, S.J., says, "As Saint Francis would say, when we consider the earthly creatures to be our 'brothers' and 'sisters,' why couldn't we also talk about an 'extraterrestrial brother'?" He would still be part of creation." For the English translation of this interview with *Osservatore Romano*, go to <http://tinyurl.com/5gfpbw>.

QUOTE for our time: “The statement of the Australian bishops is not unexpected, but it is disappointing. My book is about the response to the revelations of sexual abuse within the church. Sexual abuse is all about power and sex, so it is surely reasonable to ask questions about power and sex in the church.

In their statement, the bishops appear to be saying that, in seeking to respond to abuse, we may investigate all other factors contributing to abuse, but we may not ask questions concerning ways in which teachings, laws, and attitudes concerning power and sex within the church may have contributed.

This imposes impossible restrictions on any serious and objective study, and it is where I have broken from the Bishops Conference.” We must be free to follow the argument wherever it leads. *Bishop Geoffrey Robinson replying to the Australian Bishops Conference statement against his book*

COMMENTARY

Sr. Catherine Mullkerin

“May she rest in peace and rise in glory... and may her heroic voice and example never fade from our midst.” <http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com>

Sr. Catherine Mullkerin wore two habits – that of the Sisters of St. Joseph and that of Jesus’ call to protect the “little ones” (Mark 9:42). Both habits made up her vocation and her voice. “As assistant director of the Boston Archdiocesan Office for Victims of Abuse from 1992 to 1994, Mulkerrin received allegations of clergy abuse and dealt directly with victims. She once said she heard allegations against more than 100 priests during that period.” See <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5j7MNsxNb-lywYe-dmexhXZbYEEoQD90P3KB80>.

In 1994, Sr. Catherine resigned her Boston diocesan position but the paper trail she left behind became another part of the case documentation of widespread, longstanding abuse and its cover up by diocesan leaders, all of which burst into the public arena in 2002. As the SNAP website notes from David France’s book *Our Fathers*:

“She felt the church should actually go looking for victims of sexual abuse, by visiting each alleged perpetrator’s past assignments and making formal announcements. At the very least, she said, notices should be placed in local parish bulletins where the priests had served — victims should be offered prayer and therapy without having to come and ask for it. This she felt was necessary to fulfill the spirit of the new (US Bishop Conference) policy, which called for the church to ‘deal as openly as possible with members of the community. ... in 1994, after only two years on the job, Sister Mulkerrin resigned.”

For more information, visit http://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2003_01_06/2003_04_08_Washington_ArchdioceseNun.htm; http://snapnetwork.org/snap_statements/2008_statements/051906_nun_sr_Catherine_Mulkerrin.htm; and <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5j7MNsxNb-lywYe-dmexhXZbYEEoQD90P3KB80>. For the *Boston Globe* obituary, go to http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/obituaries/articles/2008/05/20/sister_catherine_mulkerrin_73_pressed_for_warnings_about_abusive_priests/

Perhaps not in the way Sr. Catherine would have anticipated when she entered the convent in 1955, and like Fr. Tom Doyle, her name is honored as one of the very few Catholics “in the know” who spoke out *at once* against the incidence and the handling of clergy sexual abuse.

Bishop Robinson's U. S. Visit

The Bishop Confronts Power; the Magisterium Confronts the Bishop

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, the recently retired auxiliary bishop of Sydney, Australia, and author of a book critical of the Church's handling of clergy sexual abuse (*Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*), is in the U.S. to promote his book. Meanwhile, back at home, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference had this to say about the book: "The book's questioning of the authority of the Church is connected to Bishop Robinson's uncertainty about the knowledge and authority of Christ himself. Catholics believe that the Church, founded by Christ, is endowed by him with a teaching office which endures through time. This is why the Church's Magisterium teaches the truth authoritatively in the name of Christ. The book casts doubt upon these teachings." For the full statement, go to <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bishops/confpres/20080508514.htm>.

Subsequent to the above notice, Cardinal Roger Mahony of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles wrote to Bishop Robinson (May 9) forbidding the bishop from speaking in that diocese; he advised Bishop Robinson to cancel his entire tour of the U.S. For the VOTF reaction to Cardinal Mahony's statement, [click here](#). For additional follow-up coverage on the Bishop Robinson visit, visit <http://dccatholic.wordpress.com/2008/05/20/disgraced-australian-bishop-geoffrey-robinson-speaks-in-the-archdiocese-of-washington/>; http://www.catholica.com.au/breakingnews/017_bn_160508.php; and for all of the above original texts (Cardinal Mahony's letter, Bishop Mahony's reply to the Australian bishops, VOTF statements on one page) – go to <http://tomorrowstrust.ca/?p=1972>.

The Bishop will be speaking at many VOTF affiliates and other organizations/groups. What follows is the upcoming itinerary and contact information such as we know it:

May 22, Long Island NY/ philmegna@earthlink.net, paongael@optonline.net

May 28, Paulist Center, Boston MA/debber@beld.net

May 29, VOTF Boston MA: St. Susanna Parish, Dedham MA/benhar@earthlink.net

June 5, Cleveland OH, FutureChurch/chris@futurechurch.org, or emily@futurechurch.org

June 7, Seattle WA, CTA/: tombethill@comcast.net

June 10, San Diego CA, Univ. of California Faculty Club/Richard Sipe, Fr. Thomas Doyle and Patrick Wall at awrsipe@san.rr.com

June 11, VOTF CA Orange County CA/sdzida@dcslaw.com

June 12, Encino CA, CTA; IHM; VOTF; Dignity/thonore@sbcglobal.net

June 13, San Francisco Ca, VOTF San Francisco/robt.rowden@sbcglobal.net

PRIESTS' Support Working Group

Submitted by Svea Fraser

The National Ministry Summit held in Orlando, Florida, last month was an unprecedented gathering of laity, priests, deacons, and religious (along with a few bishops) to discuss ways to creatively adapt to the changing environment of our universal church. A full account is available on the NMS website: www.emergingmodels.org John Ryan and I were there to represent the National Priest Support Working Group in particular, and Voice of the Faithful in general. John's comprehensive report is available in the May 8, 2008, issue of *In the Vineyard*. My remarks support and supplement his reflections.

Our Voice of the Faithful organization was represented as exhibitor, as active participant in the action groups at the conference, and as host to the 40th anniversary dinner of the NFPC. How did this come about? Thanks to the invitation of a priest.

Last September, John Ryan convened our national working group in Chicago. For some of us who have been working together for two years, it was the first opportunity to meet face-to-face. Because we are continually seeking ways to collaborate with our priests, we invited Fr. Don Cozzens to join us, as well as Fr. Richard Vega, president of the National Federation of Priests Councils. During the course of the meeting, Fr. Vega acknowledged us as "co-workers in the vineyard." As a tangible first step, he invited us to host the 40th anniversary dinner of the NFPC, which was to be held at the close of the National Ministry Summit in April, 2008.

The Working Group saw this as an excellent opportunity to build relationships with the clergy. Everyone contributed money for the \$3,000 price tag to be present at the banquet. In addition to hosting this event, we were able to have an exhibit at the conference as well as to register as attendees. John and I were unique in wearing two name tags because of that dual role. I was even more unique in being a temporary member of the NFPC—which was indicated by a white ribbon on my name tag. It also saved us \$200 apiece on the registration fee. VOTF National helped defray the cost by contributing to the exhibit and registration fees. Thank you to all of you who made this possible. We believe it was money well spent.

Why do we believe this was money well spent?

First and foremost, the benefits of building relationships in person are priceless. We met people—clergy and lay—who support VOTF; we met people who were surprised we were there; and we met others who knew next to nothing about our cause. We must continually seek ways to be present to one another. As a priest from the Midwest wrote to me in an email, "I get your VOF (sic) emails regularly and will more devotedly pay attention to them (we get so many email newsletters) since meeting you and catching the spirit of your enthusiasm."

Secondly, we have something unique to contribute to the conversation: Ours is a voice that both challenges and encourages. We are different from the six ecclesial organizations that we joined at the Summit, all of them operating within the parameters of the

institutional church. As an independent lay movement, we are freer to ask the hard questions, and to stress the need for identifying the underlying causes of the current situation. Parish life as we know it will never be the same, and the changes resulting from the revelations of the past years, along with seismic demographic shifts, force every Catholic to accept responsibility for its renewal. VOTF began as a result of the revelations of clergy sexual abuse and its subsequent cover-up: We insist on the structural and cultural changes that insure transparency and accountability from our leadership, safety for our children, and justice for all. We share common goals with organizations both within and outside the institutional church's boundaries, and each one of us has a voice that needs to be heard.

Thirdly, the language at the Summit was rich in Vatican II concepts: collaboration, subsidiarity, collegiality, active participation of the laity, transparency and accountability. It resonates with our vision, mission and goals. And being part of the Summit resonates with David O'Brien's insistence that we must be both prayerful and political in networking with others to share responsibility for the future of our church. (His comments are available on a DVD of the panel presentation, "Priesthood in Crisis: Everyone's Crisis", VOTF Providence Convention).

This is a political moment for VOTF: There are conversations taking place that extend well beyond the horizon that has been ours for the past six years. Inclusion in this Summit let us in on what others are saying, and reminded us that we have much in common. A place at this particular table does not guarantee that our efforts have prevailed (nor does it mean that we will not continue to support our friends in organizations outside these ecclesial ones), but it does give us encouragement that we are being heard. (If you log onto "Exhibitors" on the Summit website, VOTF is listed with a direct link to our website.)

The 40th anniversary banquet of the NFPC was held on the closing day of the Summit. By then John and I had met quite a few priests from around the country, and overseas. (The President of the National Conference of Priests of England and Wales went home with two VOTF DVD's.) Although it was a bit awkward being the only woman at the cocktail reception, John and I were warmly received and given an introduction at the banquet, along with gratitude offered for our contribution. There were over 200 priests in attendance—200 people whom we hope will be more open to the untapped resources of the Voice of the Faithful in their home dioceses.

Fr. Ron Knott (Archdiocese of Louisville) was honored at this banquet, and in his acceptance speech he challenged the priests to overcome "tribalism" in the clergy by a radical conversion of mind and heart toward the good of one another. He also acknowledged that, "Priests are waiting to be led by shepherds whose voices are convincing enough to follow." In his closing remarks he quoted Nikos Kazantzakis, whose words are a fitting conclusion to this report:

"By believing passionately in that which does not exist we create it. That which is non-existent has not been sufficiently desired." For those who are suspicious of some kind of "just believe it and you will see it" approach, I would refer to Dale Carnegie's words,

“Believe that you will succeed...believe it firmly and you will do what is necessary to bring it to success.” Believing is different from wishing. Believing leads to positive action on our part. Wishing simply waits for others to act on our behalf

OFFICE Notes

Dear Sojourners,

Effective June 30, 2008, I am leaving my post as editor of the *Vineyard* to complete graduate studies begun two years ago and to focus on other work. After six years, the *Vineyard* and I have survived – and, at times, prospered by – five executive and interim-executive directors, several new officers, a leadership council that is now a National Representative Council, and more than a few upsets and victories, congratulations and criticisms. I leave with gratitude for all of the above.

We become what we experience and as my Ignatian professor said so often in the past year, “We are always *becoming*.” That is good news for humanity, of course, but in our context, it is a profoundly urgent realization for the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Their *becoming* is what fostered our own. First and foremost, I thank the survivors for the courage of their prophetic voices.

Since October 2002, a few days after Steve Krueger gave me the go-ahead to launch a VOTF e-newsletter, you and VOTF have been connected. The most important ingredient in the *Vineyard* has always been your voices – affiliate activities and milestones; one-off letters; commentaries pro and con on a variety of concerns; prayers written by people with no liturgical or theological background; tidbits only an engaged Catholic would want to know (the “stuff” of SITE-Seeing, Etc.); and letters you didn’t want published but I answered them anyway. I owe you the motivation to re-invest in our faith by returning to graduate study as a “seasoned student”!

I have genuinely loved my work on the *Vineyard*. The people who have been writing to, supporting and filling its pages for six years are why I invested as much as I could in its appeal, scope, etc. The *Vineyard* has a funny sort of free-wheeling history, too, which also made it enticing – from 34 pages (!) monthly (Here’s an exchange between Steve Krueger and me in 2003. Steve: “Peggie, just a brief word about the *Vineyard*.” Peggie: “What is it?” Steve: “That’s it – brief.”) to a 16-18 page/twice monthly (Ray and I were sure that publishing it twice monthly would shorten it), to the 8-12 pager it is today. In addition, we initiated a two-year hard-copy quarterly *Voice* (2002-2004) and had a shorter stint with our semi-annual *Voice Matters* (2005-2006) – both a generous gift from Brown Publishing Company, then in Wellesley.

Of course, the *Vineyard* will continue to survive and prosper for several reasons: because of its readers and the amazing volunteers and small staff who conduct the business of being voices of the faithful; because of the engaging ups and downs of both the institutional Church AND the VOTF organization; and, most important, because VOTF is ensuring that the genie (the voice of lay Catholics) will not be going back into the bottle.

Finally, a monk correspondent’s words: He wrote to us in the Spring of 2002 and I published it in the July 2002 issue of *Voice*: “As you stand in the valley, take a good look. A mountain is about to rise beneath your feet.” In the next *Vineyard*, I will reprint the other four letters published in that first communication vehicle. Their messages remain true and uplifting.

I wish each of you joy in your *becoming*,
Peggie L. Thorp