

In the Vineyard

May 3, 2007

“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.” *Luke 12:2-3 is the inscription on an Iowa monument to survivors of sexual abuse. Follow the photos below.*

NATIONAL News

CONVENTION 2007 Update – VOTF vice president Sally Vance-Trembath frames the upcoming VOTF Convention in Providence RI October 19-21. See the Convention Update page here.

WORKING Group Updates:

John Ryan, chair of the VOTF National **Priest Support Working Group**, is one of two VOTF members managing a VOTF booth at the annual National Federation of Priests' Councils conference in Tampa, FL. See the Priests Support Working Group Update for impressions from Day #1.

AFFILIATE Highlights: Three states, three VOTF affiliates, three windows into Church operations in this issue. The VOTF Bridgeport CT/Fairfield University conference “Follow the Money” considers parish and diocesan finances that continue to plague Catholics in the pews; the Philadelphia PA gathering focused on church finances; and the Long Island NY Faith Convention provided an opportunity to learn more about our faith community (DIOCESE/State Watch). The Book Review in this issue is another window into the workings of our Church.

On the fifth VOTF anniversary, the bi-annual **National Representative Council** meeting was held in MA April 27-29 bringing representation from 11 states – FL, IL, ME, MD, MA, MN, NY, OH, PA, TX and VA – in good, ol' pre-email style. Hospitality was provided by Boston VOTF. Read the meeting recap here. (Note the prayer written by Bud Bretschneider on Sunday morning for the Council's closing session.) NRC minutes will be posted on our web site over the next two weeks.

SURVIVOR Support, Anyone? SNAP is holding its annual convention July 20-22 in Washington DC. Visit the SNAP web site for registration information and/or to see how you might help: <http://www.snapnetwork.org/>. Survivor Community News: Read the story behind these photos.

PHOTOS A and B.

See **OFFICE Notes**: VOTF welcomes Michael Rafferty to the Development Office; the Executive Director Search continues. Recent VOTF press releases are here.

DIOCESE/State Watch: (See inside pages for follow-up items on San Diego bankruptcy; Rockville Centre NY diocese abuse trial; Spokane WA settlement; the recent VOTF Long Island NY Faith Convention; VOTF Bridgeport CT conference; Phila., PA meeting)

Boston MA: Financial transparency in the Boston archdiocese is becoming even more transparent (see <http://rcab.org/News/releases/2007/statement070425.html>). The boston.com web site reports: “The release of financial information, which is voluntary but arrives after considerable public pressure and a failed attempt last year by some legislators to mandate financial disclosure by religious organizations, largely fulfills a pledge by O’Malley to share financial details with area Catholics. Some other big-city archbishops are now doing the same, but others, most notably Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York, have declined to do so.” See more at http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/04/26/archdiocese_cuts_2m_from_deficit/. By contrast, note Cardinal Egan’s remarks on the front page of the *New York Times* at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/23/nyregion/23egan.html> (subscription required). When asked why the archdiocese of NY doesn’t release financial documents as is being done in other dioceses, he replied, “I am transparent to the best possible people,” he said in a rare interview in his 20th floor office on First Avenue in Manhattan. “So when you say, ‘We don’t know,’ well, my ‘we’ knows.” (*NYT* April 23, 2007)

The **VOTF Bridgeport CT** and the chair of Catholic Studies at Fairfield University presented “Follow the Money: Financial Accountability in the Catholic Church” on Saturday April 28. Dan Sullivan provides a recap (see DIOCESE/State Watch page) and excerpts from Joe O’Callaghan’s presentation, which will be on the VOTF Bridgeport web site in the upcoming weeks (www.votfbpt.org).

Cleveland OH: “Kenneth Schoettmer was convicted of a felony in 2003 and is on Ohio’s sex offender registry. In 2004, Thomas Kuhn was convicted of 11 misdemeanor counts of public indecency and providing alcohol to minors. More than three dozen men sued David Kelley, alleging he sexually abused them as boys. All three remain priests on the payroll of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati.” For more, go to the *Dayton Daily News* at <http://www.daytondailynews.com/n/content/oh/story/news/local/2007/04/21/ddn042207priest.html>.

Portland OR: From the *Portland Tribune*: “The Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon plans to release to the public internal documents about church personnel accused of child abuse over the last 50 years as part of its recently approved bankruptcy settlement, church officials and lawyers for sex abuse claimants announced Tuesday.” Go to http://www.portlandtribune.com/news/story.php?story_id=117685286439263500.

COMMENTARY

“Once There Was a Parish Rich” from *Betty Claremont, VOTF Atlanta GA*

“Following the Money” – VOTF/Fairfield University conference recap

BOOK Review Hinze B. 2006. *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments*. New York, Continuum, 326 pp. With thanks to reviewer Thomas F. Malone, Greater West Hartford, CT VOTF

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

Two items in the Monday April 23 issue of the *New York Times* – a front page piece on Cardinal Egan of the Archdiocese of NY as he submits his pro forma resignation to the Pope and a David Gibson Op-Ed on Pope Benedict XVI on the Pope’s second anniversary – are worth reading. Subscribers may access at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/23/nyregion/23egan.html?ref=todayspaper> and http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/23/nyregion/23egan.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin.

- Also note an Associated Press item in the April 17 issue of the *Washington Post* at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/17/AR2007041700820_pf.html.

Fr. Tom Doyle has assembled a *bibliography on clergy sexual abuse* in the Roman Catholic Church. It is available at “Voice from the Desert” at <http://voicefromthedesert.blogspot.com/2007/04/clergy-sexual-abuse-bibliography.html>.

A *National Catholic Reporter* editorial sees “little genuine progress on sex abuse” at http://www.ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2007b/042007/042007r.php.

- The current issue of *NCR* focuses on priests and their particular challenges over the last five years. Go to www.ncronline.org.

QUOTE for our time: To paraphrase poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The just person justifies.”

OFFICE Notes

Michael Rafferty, an experienced fundraiser, has been added to the VOTF staff for a short-term project to assist in the fiscal year end (May 31, 2007) appeal. Michael, who has been involved in volunteer activities with the VOTF for many years, will also help plan and implement the development strategy for major donors and the outreach to private and public foundations and grants.

These are activities that until now have been the responsibility of the Executive Director and it is now the feeling of the Board of Trustees and the Officers of VOTF that these areas require the undivided attention of a fundraising professional.

Michael began his duties two weeks ago and will remain on staff until at least the end of this fiscal year. Work has started with the development committee and other leaders and volunteers to begin these development activities.

The VOTF National Executive Director search continues. For details, [click here](#).

DIOCESE /State Watch

San Diego CA: The Los Angeles Times reports a legal confrontation over church property in the San Diego archdiocese bankruptcy proceedings. Go to <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-brom21apr21,1,1846825.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california>.

Rockville Centre NY: “It is the first time the diocese has come face to face with its accusers in a sexual abuse case in court. Most cases have been settled or they have fallen outside the statute of limitations.” AM New York site has the story at <http://www.amny.com/news/local/ny-lisex0417,0,5168016.story?coll=sns-ap-world-headlines>. Also note *Stamford Times* coverage at http://www.thestamfordtimes.com/stamford_templates/stamford_story/288737965395528.php and the *Stamford Advocate* at <http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/local/state/hc-25193919.apds.m0196.bc-ct--churapr25,0,4085039.story?coll=hc-headlines-local-wire>. *Newsday* reported this story at <http://www.newsday.com/news/local/wire/newyork/ny-bc-ny--churchabuselawsui0424apr24,0,1947896.story?coll=ny-region-apnewyork>.

Spokane WA: From VOTF’s bi-monthly one-page newsletter "Focus": The diocese of Spokane WA headed by Bishop William Skylstad, President of the USCCB, recently emerged from bankruptcy proceedings. But unlike the Archdiocese of Portland OR, which came out of bankruptcy a few days before, Spokane refused to release the personnel records which would have revealed the numerous diocese officials who had cooperated in these heinous crimes by transferring known abusers from parish to parish ever since the 1930s. That Skylstad had once shared a residence with a priest who has admitted to abusing dozens of boys makes the need for accountability and transparency all the more vital. For VOTF’s statement [click here](#). For a news account, [click here](#).

VOTF Greater Phila., PA: On May 1 fifty-three members of Greater Philadelphia Voice of the Faithful heard Dr. Robert West of Villanova University speak about the survey he and Dr. Charles Zech conducted on church finances. Although the news media picked up on the statistic that 85% of the Dioceses responding to the survey (78 in number) experienced embezzlement in the past five years and in 11% of these dioceses the embezzlement was more than \$500,000, this was not the most important information Dr. West shared with his audience.

Dr. West said that more importantly the survey revealed that independent audits of both dioceses and parishes are held infrequently if at all. In addition, he said that there are often too few members of a parish staff to allow for a segregation of duties, which could effectively cut down on the number of opportunities for embezzlement. Perhaps the most surprising thing that he said was that while the Catholic Church is hierarchical in its very

nature, when it comes to financial structure there is not a hierarchy; each parish can set up its own system and very few ordinaries will interfere. Another interesting statistic was that of the five largest drains on a diocesan budget, litigation (in general) was only listed third.

The meeting was held in St. Katharine of Siena Parish Center in Radnor Township, PA with Marita Greene presiding and Bill Culleton introducing the speaker. Mary Ellen Norpel and Tom Connolly offered the opening and closing prayers respectively.

Submitted by Gaile Pohlhaus

Long Island NY Faith Convention IV was held on April 14, 2007. The following highlights were submitted by Joe Bongiorno, Steering Committee Northwest Nassau Parish Voice, April 21, 2007.

**David Gibson on “The Rule of Benedict:
What the Future Holds for Catholics and this Pope.”**

- **Congratulated VOTF for having survived the five-year threshold for a new organization; that is a sign we are here to stay!** He senses universality among VOTF members as he meets them in his wide-ranging travels. VOTF has definitely changed the dialog in the Church regarding accountability. We have a voice that has impact. Some Bishops think they can ignore us, but they cannot.
- Noted that the white smoke tradition for announcing the election of a new Pope is only about 100 years old, but the Church makes it seem as though it has been around from the very beginning. Canonization of Popes is not traditional – prior to modern times one would have to go back 400 years to find a canonized Pope.
- Raised concern about who is running the Church when a Pope becomes physically and/or mentally disabled, especially with the life prolonging abilities of modern medicine. Thinks that it is good for the Church to have new Popes periodically. Has confidence in the Holy Spirit’s hand in the process, but historically does not see the Spirit’s hand in every case.
- Stated that many people still wonder who Joseph Ratzinger *was* and who Pope Benedict *is*. The Pope likes to separate himself from the decisions he makes saying they are not personal. He was formed as a Bavarian German and remains one. The Pope is a cultural Catholic – no conversion experience. He cannot accept the past errors of the Church with respect to anti-Semitism and the response to the Holocaust. Benedict is focused on the beauty in the Church. He is enshrined in ecclesiology. Benedict is old-fashioned and conservative – activism and reform are out of bounds. He does not have his finger on the pulse of the laity. The Church is less politicized under Benedict than it was under John Paul II.

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Camille D’Arienzo, R.S.M. on

“Preaching: A Ministry in Distress.”

- **Indicated that the proposal by the VOTF Priest Support Working Group to study the priesthood and its impact on the laity called out to her.** She saw it as a way to promote an important conversation among Catholics. Her hope is relentless.
- Noted that the majority of practicing Catholics’ needs are met at weekend Mass, so it is very important that they hear good homilies. Some priests and deacons are not gifted in this way. There is also the problem of the priest shortage and the number of priests whose first language is not English. So un-ordained, qualified, enthusiastic preachers should be considered as an alternative. She enjoys her one-minute Catholic commentaries on 1010 WINS each week, but would prefer the pulpit and is available. **She pointed out that a preacher in the Vatican household has said that humanity is in need of a woman’s heart.**
- Wished that there was some mechanism in place to critique homilies. Homilies should connect to social issues – unjust wars, immigration, the homeless, etc.
- Mentioned that the Brooklyn diocese is allowing “reflections” at Mass by un-ordained preachers after communion. She feels, however, at that point there is a dis-connect from the readings and gospel so that the presentation is not as effective.

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Anne Barrett Doyle of BishopAccountability.Org

- Announced that a report entitled **“Parishes, Schools, and Facilities in the Rockville Centre Diocese Where Priests and Brothers Accused of Sex Crimes Have Worked”** has been listed on their website. It shows that over 67% of parishes in the diocese had at least one accused priest working there at some time since 1950. One parish (St. James in Seaford) had seven accused priests. In another parish (St. Dominic’s in Oyster Bay), 3 accused priests logged 41 non-overlapping years in the rectory. In total, nearly 1,000 person-years were logged by accused priests. Visit www.bishopaccountability.org.

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Richard Sipe on “Learning from Our History; Celibacy and How to Protect Against Abusers.”

- **Urged VOTF to keep focused on its goals, remember its place in history, intervene effectively, and speak truth to power. VOTF should remain a movement and not become an organization – Jesus started a movement...**
- Said that he was a consultant to the Boston Globe prior to publication of their first story on the sex abuse crisis and that they expected ten or so similar cases might

unravel. By the time they had completed their investigation, more than 150 priest-abuse cases had been identified and 1,200 stories had been written.

- Concluded from interviews with 1500 priests or their sexual partners between 1960 and 1985 that nearly 50% of priests were sexually active: 6% of priests were sexually involved with minors, 20 – 25% were involved with adult women, and 15% with adult men. Celibacy is a vocation that has to be taught, nourished, and understood. Not enough is being done in the seminaries in this regard. Instead the Pope and Bishops are focused on preserving the myth of celibacy.
- Claimed that the Church is wrong about sex. The Bible is not the authority on sexuality and science. **As Copernicus and Galileo had to teach the Church that the earth moves, the laity has to teach the Church about sexuality.** Each of us has the capacity to determine what is right and what is wrong. But sex is the original addiction and has to be handled responsibly. Separation of science from philosophy and religion was a milestone in the advancement of mankind. It is a matter of reason verses blind loyalty.
- Pointed out that a top job of a Bishop is to protect the Church from sexual and financial scandal. Bankruptcies have been filed to keep records secret and to avoid having to testify under oath. Millions of dollars have been spent by Dioceses on this stonewalling. The Church can exert enormous power on those who accuse them.
- Visit <http://www.richardsipe.com/>.

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Liturgy of the Word: The assembled participated in a closing prayer, which used **Resurrection verses** for silent reflection. We too are witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus, bringing his light to the world by our deeds and proclaiming, “My Lord and My God.” All joined in singing “**Christ Be Our Light**”, which brought Faith Convention IV to a close, and sent us forth renewed!

BOOK Review

Hinze, B. 2006. *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments*. New York, Continuum, 326 pp.

This book is a scholarly report on the “triumphs and tragedies” of continuing efforts “to move from a strictly hierarchical approach” of the traditional church to the “more dialogical approach” urged by Vatican II. The post-Vatican church’s mission includes “activities of teaching, administering the sacraments, governing, pastoral care, and work for justice ... in which all of the members of the church are actively participating.” Hinze’s book belongs in the personal library of each member of VOTF concerned with our church’s path into the future.

Examples of progress towards this vision range from (a) parish councils hampered by a “consultative-only clause” to (b) diocesan pastoral councils and diocesan synods, both

promising for the future but still under development, and on to (c) ecumenical and interreligious dialogues. Interspersed among these episodes are commentaries on the Call to Action (CTA) movement initiated by what is now the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and intended to be responsive to Vatican II, but still awaiting a pastoral plan of action, priorities, and plan for implementation. CTA now hosts annual conferences that are the largest progressive Catholic gatherings in the country – even though distanced from the bishops.

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative, stimulated by the late Cardinal Bernardin but heavily criticized by prominent U. S. cardinals concerned with undermining traditional authority, never arrived at the intended consensus. Dialogues on authority and leadership by women religious remain “to be fully worked out” because of differences between what women and men want.

The author concludes from these diverse episodes that our church is embarked on “a difficult pedagogical pilgrimage involved in identity formation which is associated with the genre called *Bildungsroma*.” This is a long, arduous, and gradual maturing process consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonists’ needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order.

His most cogent observation is: “The issues raised by the critics of dialogue and the defenders of an older hierarchical model of authority and tradition – and here [Cardinal] Dulles offers the most fully developed U. S. Catholic example – must be matched by an alternative theology of the church’s identity and mission equal in scope and depth and spiritual richness to his own. Such an alternative theology, I would argue, does not need to deny the crucial role of papal, episcopal and clerical authority. However, the theology of ordination and of offices and their exercise must be reformulated within the large field of vision associated with the dialogical understanding of the church and world that has become more clearly into view during and since Vatican II.”

In the final analysis, this transition must be reflected at the local level. The parish of the next millennium will operate on the principles of subsidiarity (matters ought to be handled by the smallest (or, the lowest) competent authority) and collegiality (seeking consensus in addition to a role in decision making). These characteristics are identified in William Bausch’s *The Parish of the Next Millennium* [another book that deserves space in the personal library of each member of VOTF].

Heartening developments abound. Under the leadership of Albany diocese’s Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, a three-year initiative entitled “Called to BE Church” is being mounted (www.rcda.org). Bishop Hubbard’s charge centered on the message of Vatican II: “... the council pointed out that the responsibility for the life and mission of the church is a responsibility whose dimensions are universal, applying to clergy, religious, and laity alike. All are bound together by a variety of gifts and ministries and all are called to serve the one mission, the mission of Jesus, to be served by a multiplicity of ministries and ministers.” *Thomas F. Malone, Greater West Hartford, CT VOTF*

VOTF 2007 CONVENTION Update

Our convention will take place October 19-21 in Providence, RI. Between now and then, I have been asked to keep VOTF informed about the convention. VOTF is a distinctive organization that does not readily fit into any existing category in the life of the Church. Our conventions reflect that distinctiveness. This convention, like the others before it, will have its own distinct style and reason for being. In this way, our convention is not typical of other national gatherings labeled “conventions.” For example, when the *American Heart Association* holds its convention, it follows a form and structure that has been in place for decades. Many of us go to annual professional conventions; they too have a regularity and formula. VOTF is still its formative years; we are still developing.

Our past conventions display this. They each reflect the character of VOTF as well as its emerging identity. Our character is located in our mission and goals. Our identity is located in the actions we take towards that mission. At Indianapolis we sought to discern central plans of action that would take us forward. While we will have a program that involves various actions, in Providence our main purpose is to celebrate and to reflect. We have shaped a program around the over-arching theme of a birthday party. At such a party, people gather to celebrate the present, to remember the past and to look forward to more birthdays in the future. We have created a convention with this in mind.

The convention committee has been working on our gathering. In our early phone calls we talked and listened to each other’s ideas about themes and speakers. As we did that we kept asking “who” is celebrating – Who are we? When we peeled away all the various layers of our identity, we came to our root, core identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. During this process we discussed our prior conventions. We noticed that when VOTF members gather, they want to learn and discuss and they also want to pray. We have created a program that involves both.

During a series of meetings, we collected ideas for the convention theme then asked the committee members to take the ideas back to their affiliates and VOTF constituencies for feedback. After a long process we decided upon the theme “Disciples in Action.” This theme allows us to include both education and prayerful reflection.

We will begin on Friday October 19 with workshops that will be presented by our Working Groups. These workshops are designed to display and celebrate the kind of work that has been going on in VOTF. They are also designed to inspire others as well as to provide the basic tools for implementing similar activities across VOTF. We open this way to celebrate who we are and where we are and have been. After the Workshops we will have refreshments and fellowship before we move to our Keynote speaker Richard McBrien. Professor McBrien is a long-time supporter of VOTF. Both Jim Post and Jim Muller approached him for advice when they were considering how to respond to the crisis. There are few theologians who know as much about the life and theology of the Catholic Church. Fr. McBrien will reflect upon where we have been and also upon the challenges of the present and future for VOTF.

On Saturday morning our President Mary Pat Fox will address the gathered community with her birthday reflections. Dr. Edwina Gateley will follow her talk. Dr. Gateley will share her insights about the spirituality for disciples who wished to be active and engaged. Judge Michael Merz will also address the convention; the Judge will converse with us about his work on the National Review Board for the USCCB. After lunch we will have several sessions, where panelists address various topics around our theme of discipleship. Saturday will end with our Liturgy and then a vigil and walk along the river in Providence. At this season of the year Providence lights the river with fires that make their way out to the sea. We will build upon the symbol of moving light with a procession of our own.

Our Convention Implementation Team from Indianapolis has been working on our next action with the up-coming convention in mind. They are developing resources on the conscience. It is the adult, carefully formed conscience that animates the life of disciples. We encourage you to look for that action from the CIT to prepare for October. We also follow in the wisdom of good Pope John XXIII who asked that the whole Church pray each day in the time before Vatican II convened. We ask for your prayers as well.

COMMENTARY

“Once There Was a Parish Rich”

Doraville is spit of low-cost apartments and homes jutting north from the City of Atlanta bisecting two affluent northern suburbs. Run down industrial buildings hug the railroad right-of-way. In 1991, the Archdiocese of Atlanta bought an old warehouse for the use of the burgeoning Latino community.

During its best years, Our Lady of the Americas Hispanic Mission, was the center of Latino life in the Chamblee/Doraville area. Located next to the railroad tracks, a transit station and bus depot, “la mission” served as parish, social services provider and community center. The mission provided, at one time or another, without ever charging a fee, a health clinic, legal services, job training and job placement, English and computer classes, a sports program and homeless shelter. There were always food, clothes and a shower available. Any civic, health or law enforcement official who wanted to contact the Hispanic community had only to make one stop. It also was a haven for homeless Americans who knew they could always find some necessities and a kind word.

This was in addition to the regular parish work of mass, spiritual counseling, religious education, baptisms, and weddings. And it was all done by one priest, Fr. Carlos Garcia-Carreras, S. J., and a paid staff of four. Atlantans were so impressed by his personal sanctity and dedication, there were always sufficient volunteers and donations to keep the place running. Four close-by prosperous parishes made generous quarterly donations to keep the lights turned on and the building maintained.

After Carlos left, the diocesan priests who took over gradually decreased the social services. Secular and governmental agencies and the new evangelical

store-front churches stepped in to take up the slack. When Archbishop John F. Donoghue left the archdiocese with over \$100 million in debt for new schools to educate well-to-do suburban children and a \$50 million retirement complex, which included apartments for himself and some priests, parishes were forced to cede 23% of their income to the archdiocese. The mission – which was never able to tithe very much – was closed last May.

Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory bought a vacant Seventh Day Adventist church fifteen miles away in the next county that has also seen a tremendous growth in the Latino population and named it Our Lady of the Americas. The new church was greatly needed but the pastor frequently reminded his congregation that they were expected to be self-supporting and needed to repay the archdiocese.

In Georgia, undocumented immigrants cannot obtain a legal drivers license. Now there is no Catholic Church available to the thousands of members of the former community who walk or use bicycles or public transportation. The other four parishes valiantly stepped up their bilingual services, but like the new church, are only accessible by car. The message, of course, is that only Catholics who can contribute financially are valued.

Sadly, this scenario has been repeated throughout the United States with the closing of a multitude of inner city parishes and facilities. But for me, it's personal. I lost my family and am now just another homeless Catholic. *Betty Clermont, Vice-chair, VOTF-Atlanta*

VOTF Bridgeport is following the Money

Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport and The Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J., Chair of Catholic Studies of Fairfield University sponsored a conference entitled “Follow the Money: Financial Accountability in the Catholic Church,” held at Fairfield University on Saturday, April 28. The conference was attended by over 125 people.

The Diocese of Bridgeport holds real property valued on the tax rolls of the twenty-three towns in Fairfield County at nearly one billion dollars, according to Daniel B. Sullivan, Vice-Chair of Voice of the Faithful. Sullivan's report was based on an extensive survey conducted by VOTF over six months of all properties identified as belonging to the Catholic Church in Fairfield County. These included churches, rectories, convents, elementary schools, high schools, cemeteries, hospitals, Sacred Heart University, commercial buildings, condominiums, houses, vacant lands, and the like. The survey recorded the appraised or market value of these properties as determined by tax assessors in the various towns of Fairfield County. Sullivan also noted that such appraisals ordinarily do not include artwork, statuary, stained glass, and other ecclesiastical ornamentation, whose value is nearly incalculable.

Sullivan noted that that in many cases, the appraisals appeared to be artificially low, at least in relation to the replacement cost of the properties. He cited as one example a stone

church constructed in the late 19th century that was appraised at approximately \$150 per square foot, and suggested that at today's cost of construction in Fairfield County it would be almost economically impossible to recreate that structure if it were destroyed.

Sullivan reported that the Diocese recently sold three nursing homes to a commercial operator, but retained ownership of the land that it leased for 99 years to the new operators. No financial details of that transaction have been released, so it is impossible to put an accurate value on those properties. The Diocese has also leased for 99 years a parcel of land in the heart of downtown Stamford to a developer who plans to build a multi-use commercial and residential development on the site. Again, the Diocese has reported none of the financial details of that transaction.

In discussing the evolution of the Catholic Church in Fairfield County from its humble beginnings in 1830, when the first Mass was celebrated in a private home in Bridgeport, to the first Church constructed there in 1842, to today's complex of 87 parishes, 38 schools, 9 homes for the elderly and many other real estate holdings, including commercial properties and undeveloped land, Sullivan noted that Church resources are increasingly directed to the maintenance of such properties and are thus diverted from services to the needy. In 2004, it appears from financial statements released by the diocese that out of combined revenues of over \$145 million, the Diocese reported "Property Operations Expense" of over \$16 million, while support from the Diocese for Catholic Charities represented only a little more than \$4 million.

Sullivan also mentioned that in her recent appearance before a committee of the Connecticut state legislature to testify against a proposal to extend the statute of limitations in child molestation cases, the Chancellor of the Diocese, Nancy Matthews, was quoted as saying, "Those who will be injured most by this extension of the statute will be the poorest and neediest among us. Resources that would otherwise be used for their benefit will be diverted to adjudicate claims....The Church is not an economic bottomless pit." Sullivan noted that the Church has probably spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in the past several years resisting the release of documents detailing the history of sexual abuse and ecclesiastical cover-up in the diocese, and that although the Churches resources may not be a "bottomless pit", they are certainly very deep.

Mary Pat Fox, the National President of Voice of the Faithful, opened the conference by addressing "Our Role in Financial Accountability." She stressed the obligation of every Catholic to determine that our contributions to the Church are used wisely and that pastors and bishops provide a regular, understandable accounting of income and expenditures.

Joseph F. O'Callaghan*, a member of VOTF, directed attention to the problem of financial management and mismanagement in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The scandals involving Fr. Michael Jude Fay of St. John Parish in Darien and Fr. Michael Moynihan of St. Michael Parish in Greenwich point up the failure of Parish Finance Councils and of the Diocese to exercise adequate supervision of parish spending. The Diocese too failed in its supervisory role, as both pastors, contrary to diocesan directives, maintained off-the-books accounts, apparently known only to themselves.

In addition, the Diocese has made only limited efforts to render an accounting of income and expenses. Brief financial summaries of diocesan and parish operations for 2003 and 2004 were issued, as well as the complete audit of the Diocesan Corporation for 2005. Publication of the audit of the Diocesan Corporation for 2006 has been delayed. However, no audit of the parish corporations has been released.

O’Callaghan also reviewed the canon and civil law relating to structure of the Parish and Diocesan Corporations, and the Parish and Diocesan Finance Councils. He recommended that the civil law concerning parish and diocesan corporations should be changed to entrust ownership of church property to the whole body of the faithful through their elected representatives. He also recommended that Parish and Diocesan Finance Councils should be elected bodies representative of the faithful. Emphasizing that the Bishop’s Annual Appeal, the *cathedraticum*, and the school subsidy are all examples of taxes levied on parishes, he invoked the principle of “no taxation without representation,” and argued that the Diocese should seek the counsel and consent of whole body of the faithful before imposing these levies.

John Marshall Lee, current chair of VOTF, presided over a lengthy discussion with members of the audience. Among the questions raised were: the legal expenses involved in the Diocese’s continuing effort to prevent publication of court documents concerning priestly sexual abuse; the financial security of the clergy, including their salaries, benefits and rights under the Diocesan pension plan; the possible loss of pension and benefits; the use of insurance money to fund sexual abuse legal settlements; the sale of church property for the same purpose; steps taken to recover the loss of funds at both St. John and St. Michael Parishes; legal steps taken to bring Fay to account; and the current status of Fay and Moynihan.

*Joe O’Callaghan a VOTF Bridgeport CT leader, professor emeritus of medieval History at Fordham University, and author of an upcoming book *Electing Our Bishops: How the Catholic Church Should Choose its Leaders*. His talk, “The Money Trail: Financial Management and Mismanagement in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut” will be posted on the VOTF Bridgeport web site over the next few weeks. The Bridgeport web site has also posted an article from the *Hour* at http://www.votfbpt.org/VOTF_forum_scrutinizes_diocese_finances.pdf.

- For another parish finances story, see the Twin Cities. com site at http://www.twincities.com/localnews/ci_5776867?nlick_check=1. Read Commentary in this issue – “Once There Was a Parish Rich”.

PRIEST SUPPORT Working Group Update

John Ryan

As many of you know, Bob Stewart and I are “manning” the VOTF booth at the annual National Federation of Priests’ Councils conference in Tampa, FL. We attended our first sessions and sent this hastily written report out to our Working Group. Of note is the fact that these priests selected the internal disunity within the priesthood as the lead issue for discussion. It was an “eye opener” for both of us. Yes, we knew the priesthood is “splintered”, have read about it, been told about it, but yesterday we saw and felt its repercussions. There may be some messages here for all of us.

Greetings to all from the NFPC conference in Tampa, FL.

Our first day (Tuesday) at our booth, located in a hallway with about six other exhibitors) and another 25 exhibitors in an adjoining room, was an eye opener for Bob Stewart and I after attending the first general session in the morning.

The presenter was Fr. Ron Knott who at one time served at the Louisville, KY cathedral; the topic was the splintered priesthood, though it had a different title on the workshop menu.

About 200 priests in casual dress attended, all seated at round tables, and when the hour was over, both Bob and I looked at each other and said: We didn’t realize it was THIS bad. I would have to say this is a major, major issue for the priests in attendance, and though we knew there was a splintered priesthood, we had never heard priests talk about it in the way we heard today.

There is no shared vision of the priesthood among priests. There are differing, competing visions of the priesthood leading to “tribalism” among priests with the attendant pains and strife we hear and read about. The speaker stated that “most priests pray for unity,” but without someone to lead the effort, it will be long in coming. Bishops are the key, but most bishops do not have a clue as to what to do about it, are too busy with other things, lack the skills, etc.

The Q and A session that afternoon revealed how much of an issue this is for priests. All I can say, and Bob agrees, is that the priesthood, based on what we heard and saw today, is in a damage control mode, and this lack of unity and the divisions that exist are uppermost in their minds. We came away from this session with a sadness and concern for these good men.

Also, at this point, we have no reason to say the NFPC is in the pocket of the bishops. There seemed to be no fear to speak up (we did not sense anger as much as we sensed desperation and pain).

Another issue (second session) of great concern is the influx of international priests, and this too, was an eye opener in its own right.

Priests with whom we spoke and sat with were most cordial and welcoming. Many were glad to see us there. We also learned that the NFPC may be in decline, and that is also a matter of concern.

[Watch for more on the rest of the meeting in the next issue of the Vineyard, May 17.]

SURVIVOR Community News

Lest We Forget

Recently in Iowa, the monument you see on page 1 of this issue was dedicated to the lives of the victims of clergy sexual abuse. As reported in the *Quad-City Times*, “The monument unveiled outside SS Philip & James Catholic Church on Sunday afternoon symbolizes many things to survivors of sexual abuse, but most of all it’s a reminder for everyone not to forget what happened.” See the full story at <http://www.qctimes.com/articles/2007/04/23/news/local/doc462c39d0f1c1f008836726.txt>. The monument reads, “Dedicated to our children who were abused by those we trusted.” Additional Associated Press coverage on the TheNewsTribune.com site is at <http://www.thenewstribune.com/425/story/50131.html>.

The Biblical inscription on the monument, from Luke 12:2-3: “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.”

NATIONAL Representative Council

The prayer that follows was written by NRC Representative Bud Bretschneider (Region 3) for Council’s last session on Sunday morning:

Dear God:

RESPONSE: We felt your Spirit rise up in this place in 2002. Your Spirit spoke through our voice.

Do not let us abandon the sign your hand has placed on our hearts in that holy moment
Response

Give us courage to overcome our fears to speak the voice you have given us to speak truth and reconciliation.
Response

Whenever we seek to brandish our swords against an enemy, may our hearts burn lest we become whom we attack.
Response

Give us the openness and humility to listen to others, especially those whom we oppose.
Response

May we hold on to each other, knowing that we are embraced by Your love, as we stand up for your children.
Response

The VOTF National Representative Council met in the Boston area April 27-29 for its spring "in person" meeting. The Boston-area location was selected partly in celebration of the fifth anniversary of VOTF's founding. Twenty-two attendees from across the country met at Our Lady Help of Christians in Newton and Sunday morning at St. James the Greater in Wellesley.

Representatives were pleased to meet at these two historic sites. OLHC was the site where a fledgling VOTF voted to call for the ouster of Cardinal Law. St. James parishioners have been in vigil for 2.5 years and their hall is the site for Council of Parishes meetings, a group that seeks to reverse parish closings that were conducted without appropriate input from parishioners. Attendees also took a trip to the VOTF National headquarters office in Newton.

Also in celebration of the anniversary, Dr. James Muller, a leading founder of VOTF, spoke about the early VOTF days in his presentation to the Council Saturday night.

OVERVIEW

During the 3-day meeting, Representatives began preliminary assessment of a Lay Synod concept; opened discussions on the appropriate balance between National- and Local-initiated actions; and heard reports from Bill Casey, chair of the Board of Trustees, Mark Mullaney, interim Executive Director, Mary Pat Fox, President of VOTF, and five National Working Groups. They also heard details about the conference planned for October 2007 in Providence, R.I.; got an update on the multi-year Campaigns for Accountability; continued efforts to obtain concurrence from the National Officers on two financial accountability resolutions; and discuss the proposal on women in the Church.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Dan Bartley, Region 2 (NY) Representative and a member of the NRC's committee on Membership & Growth, outlined the preliminary stages needed to assess the **Lay Synod concept**.

At its November 2006 meeting, the NRC overwhelmingly approved a focus on a Lay Synod as a priority for the Council. Given the years-long lead-in required for such an undertaking, Dan suggested that a multi-phase approach would work best, to give VOTF the option of calling off the effort at several steps along the way.

Representatives then met in committees -- Membership & Growth; Affiliate Development; Mission, Goals & National Impact -- to consider how a lay synod might impact each of those concerns. Discussion of the option will continue on the NRC's discussion list. Dan Bartley agreed to put together a proposal for further discussion online.

Both Bill Casey and Mark Mullaney described the financial shortfall VOTF will face in the coming months. Although the number of individual contributors has increased, in the past year or so the number of major donors has declined. VOTF must reverse this trend to erase a projected \$100,000 deficit in the next fiscal year.

VOTF also must hire a Development Director who can focus entirely on bringing in major donors, obtaining foundation grants and donations, and increasing the level of giving from both. Mark noted that in the past, the development function was addressed in the Executive Director's spare time and also by the PR person, in his spare time. Obviously this function requires more attention than is possible from staff with other major responsibilities.

In addition to the financial crisis facing VOTF, Bill Casey identified a crisis in leadership. Evidence of this comes from the low response rates (a range of 1% to 5%) when members are asked for input on proposals. VOTF as a whole has difficulty in reaching closure on decisions, Bill said, as well as difficulty in respecting others' positions. In the past few years, rather than leading, many have simply been engaged in fighting about leadership. The Board of Trustees is looking for ways to move VOTF beyond this "stuck position," he said. Their start on this effort is a revised Identity Statement. The BOT is asking leaders to review the new statement and then sign it if they can agree with its content. The Statement should provide us with a common ground for moving forward.

Representatives next considered a proposal from the National Officers regarding national/local balance. Representatives reviewed the reports obtained thus far from selected major affiliates and from the officers, then discussed some of the specific cases that create tension between an affiliate's desires and National's intentions. Assessment of the appropriate balance will continue online. In the meantime, Representatives identified one area where National action and/or National support of local action could be improved: rapid response to "crisis" type situations.

In these cases -- suddenly revealed reports of sexual abuse or coverups, or unexpected reports of financial improprieties, for examples -- even if National can respond quickly, too often the other regions in the country do not hear of the response. There also is concern that in many cases, National cannot respond quickly. With Mark Mullaney, some Representatives will work on developing a "rapid response team" in conjunction with the National Office's Marketing & Communications Group. The team hopes to develop a protocol for responding to crises as quickly and factually as possible.

Mark also updated the Council on the status of the search for an Executive Director. Be patient was the message; typically it takes at least six months to hire a new E.D.

Rich Moriarty, Region 4 Representative (D.C., DE, MD, VA, WV) and a sponsor of the **women's role proposal**, showed the Council copies of Web pages and reports from the earliest days of VOTF to underscore his message that equality for women was always part of the VOTF expectation. The proposal sponsors are not demanding that the Church ordain women, he said, but seek to "establish a collective voice that would respond to the church's difficulty in articulating the equality of women in the eyes of God and each other."

Rich also asked the Council to override its Operating Procedures and send the current proposal as-is to the regional members for input. Representatives did not approve this request. The proposal will continue through the normal development process set up by Council Operating Procedures.

Speakers from the **National Working Groups** updated the NRC on projects under way, plans for the coming months, and materials available now for distribution in the regions. Pat Gomez, newly elected Representative from Region 1 (New England), described the work of the Protecting Our Children Working Group. Steve Sheehan, newly elected Representative from Region 1 (New England) spoke for the Goal 1 Support Survivors group. Donna Doucette (Region 1 New England) summarized the written report from John Ryan, chair of the Goal 2 Support Priests group. Margaret Roylance, chair of the Structural Change Working Group, reviewed results from the CD and letter the group mailed to every bishop in the U.S. dioceses. Donna Doucette, co-chair of the Voice of Renewal/Lay Education group described the resources available to members from that group.

In her **President's report**, Mary Pat Fox said VOTF is at a critical juncture. Given the financial and membership resources available to us, she said, we must do two things in order to continue: raise funds, and focus our resources on one or two issues. She described what the current landscape might be without VOTF and called on the NRC to continue to work towards giving voice to the laity.

In terms of focus, Mary Pat said it should remain on the two Accountability Campaigns, which are scheduled to run through 2008.

In response to Mary Pat's comments, members discussed the possibility of charging dues, asked for information about the status of the database listings for members, and suggested ideas for fund-raising. Reps were reminded that one of our tasks is to ensure that our own region's members provide updated information for the national database whenever they move or change email addresses. VOTF cannot reach members with all its news and all its funding requests if it never receives change-of-address info.

Lisa Kendzior from Texas (Region 10: AR, TX, and OK) said she will work with a team focused on building membership and raising money. Several other Reps offered to work with Lisa and to work with the National Office in these efforts.

Susan Vogt, Region 5 Representative (AL, KY, LA, MS, and TN) and the NRC delegate to the Campaign Implementation Team for the **Accountability Campaigns**, reported on the actions carried out so far in the campaigns and described some upcoming efforts.

Frank Douglas, Region 13 Representative (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY) and a sponsor of **three resolutions** passed recently by the NRC, asked for input from the Officers on why they have not concurred on the two of those resolutions. A process for negotiating concurrence had been set up to include one officer, one financial specialist from the NRC and Trustees (Dan Bartley, Region 2 Rep and an NRC delegate to the Board of Trustees), and one officer. Frank wanted to have an additional Rep participate and asked that Chuck Miller (Region 4 Rep) be added to the group. The Officers agreed. Those discussions will continue.

Bud Bretschneider (Region 3 PA and NJ Representative) and Mary Freeman, Treasurer of VOTF, described the speakers, panel discussions, workshops, and programs already set up for the **VOTF Conference** to be held October 19 and 20 in Providence, R.I. Reps should begin publicizing this event as soon as possible in their regions.

As part of its internal business, the NRC voted to expand its Steering Committee to four persons. This committee has been operating as if it were a four-person group for the past two years, because it included the Moderator in all operational and maintenance activities needed to support the Council. However, because there is no need for a single moderator and because the work needed has expanded so much, a four-person committee makes more sense.

The NRC then elected the following Representatives to the **Steering Committee** for two-year terms: Bill Culleton, Donna Doucette, Ron DuBois, and Sheila Peiffer.