

In the Vineyard

November 16, 2006

“Reforming Church governance is not about shared power but about mutual empowerment in the Holy Spirit.” *Fr. Patrick Collins, VOTF Cleveland, OH from his essay on “Thomas Merton on Ecclesial Reform and Renewal” in Commentary.*

In a final plea to his fellow bishops before his death in August 2003, Msgr. Philip Murnion called for "dialogue, dialogue, dialogue." Go to www.nplc.org for more information about Msgr. Murnion.

NATIONAL News

VOTF president Mary Pat Fox delivered a petition signed by over 8,000 Catholics to the Most Reverend Gregory Aymond, Bishop of the Diocese of Austin and Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People for the **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)**. The meeting was described as positive by Mary Pat who was encouraged by the bishops' concern for survivors and the protection of children. They discussed the need to make the victim assistance coordinator information easily accessible and the importance of safe environment training. The meeting took place in Baltimore on Friday, November 10, 2006. See the VOTF press release [here](#). See more National news in NATIONAL News Update.

- Mary Pat Fox and national secretary Gaile Pohlhaus met with Patricia Ewers, chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) National Review Board on Monday Nov. 13 at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel, site of the USCCB meeting. They discussed the review board's plans for more complete audits starting next year once the initial compliance issues were complete. Dr. Ewers also expressed the willingness of board members to speak to affiliates in their area.
- All the U.S. bishops received an open invitation to meet with the two attending national officers, Mary Pat and Gaile, on Monday of the USCCB meeting. While no bishop was able to accept the invitation, there were several opportunities to engage with bishops in the lobby. Affiliate leaders also noted their own communications with local bishops.
- On Monday of the USCCB meeting the bishops voted unanimously to release funds earmarked for the causes and context of sexual abuse by clergy. Meanwhile VOTF will continue to push for *full* funding and the *Vineyard* will keep you up to date on the preliminary results of the study, which are expected sometime next year.
- VOTF National organized a screening of the new documentary “Deliver Us From Evil” held on Monday of the USCCB meeting at a local theater in Baltimore. About 60 people attended the screening which was followed by a lively panel discussion with Barbara Blaine, President of SNAP and John Moynihan from the VOTF national office.
- The Washington, DC area affiliates gathered for the third consecutive year on the eve of the US bishops meeting to view the new documentary “Hand of God” – read the affiliate report in AFFILIATE Highlight under DIOCESE/State Watch.
- For a recap of the U.S. bishops' meeting in Baltimore, go to http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/11/15/bishops_stress_sexual_issues_and_warn_on_communion/

The National Representative Council (NRC) welcomed Lisa Kendzior, from Ft. Worth, TX. Lisa was recently elected Representative to the NRC from Region 10 (TX, OK,

AR). NRC met last weekend in St. Louis, MO for their third in-person gathering. A report on the Council's St. Louis bi-annual meeting will be in the Nov. 30 *Vineyard*.

Accountability Campaign Plans for Advent: See *Letter to Readers – An Advent Invitation*.

Why an Accountability Campaign? Another Catholic priest has been deemed credibly accused after an internal Church investigation. The Archdiocese of Chicago removed Rev. Robert Stepek from St. Albert the Great Catholic Church in Burbank IL on Saturday after finding the allegations of sexual abuse of two former altar boys during the 1980s were credible. Unfortunately, criminal charges cannot be filed because Illinois' three year statute of limitations law has long since expired. Click here for more information on this case. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chicago/chi-0611050381nov05,1,5932676.story?coll=chi-newslocalchicago-hed>. Click here (<http://www.votf.org/2006/poc.html>) to get more involved in our Protect Our Children effort to reform these antiquated sexual abuse laws and ensure justice for survivors.

VOTF National's Goal #2 – to **support priests of integrity** – is under new leadership with representation across the US. See chair John Ryan's update on our web site. John has also reviewed *Freeing Celibacy* by Donald Cozzens – see Book Review in this issue.

DIOCESE/State Watch:

EYES on Erie, PA: Closed to the public, the Church trial of Msgr. Charles Kavanagh, accused in 2002 of sexual abuse that took place 20 years ago, began this week in Erie, PA. VOTF, SNAP and CTA have asked that some part of the trial be open to the public. Msgr. Kavanagh was once a prominent fundraiser in the **Archdiocese of New York**. In 2004, the archdiocesan response to the accusation brought a rare public confrontation with Cardinal Egan from Msgr. Kavanagh. The trial was moved to Erie, PA to reduce media coverage. Some background and an update on this case follow:

The New York Times, 2004

at <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F50C14FE385F0C7A8CDDAE0894DC404482;BishopAccountability.org> at <http://www.bishop-accountability.org/ny-ny/Egan-2003-02.htm>. Current updates at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/14/nyregion/14abuse.html?n=Top%2FReference%2FTimes%20Topics%2FSubjects%2FR%2FReligion%20and%20Belief> and the Journal News at <http://www.thejournalnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2006611100443>.

Spokane, WA – A church divided, a diocese in bankruptcy proceedings, and priests are looking for hope; **Brooklyn, NY** – VOTF appealed to their bishop as he headed to last week's USCCB meeting; **Palm Beach, FL** – another blow to another parish; **AFFILIATE Highlight – the VOTF Washington, DC area** affiliates gathered to view “Hand of God” on the eve of the bishops' meeting.

Commentary: Fr. Patrick Collins' commentary studies Thomas Merton's attitude toward reforming the Church – giving primacy to spiritual renewal out of which the external reforms would flow. See Commentary for “Thomas Merton on Ecclesial Reform and

Renewal”; also, see your invitation in Letter to Readers.

Fr. Tom Doyle walks us through the controversial Vatican instruction “Crimen Sollicitationis” of March 16, 1962. “The document is essentially a set of procedural norms for processing cases of accusations against priests for soliciting sex while in the act of sacramental confession... It has come under discussion by canon lawyers and Vatican officials on several occasions in the past few years. Nevertheless the secrecy under which the document was originally distributed has possibly resulted in restricted awareness. Though some have claimed that “Crimen Sollicitationis” applies only to solicitation in the confessional, and not to other sexual crimes perpetrated by clerics, the opposite is true. The very words of the document itself clearly establish that those acts included under the classification of ‘the worst crime’ (*de crimine pessimo*) are to be processed according to the norms set forth for the crime of solicitation.” Read the Doyle study on the VOTF [web site](http://www.votf.org)

(http://www.votf.org/Bishops/Doyle_commentary_on_Crimen_Sollicitationis_11106.pdf).

- The BBC aired “Sex Crimes and the Vatican” on CBC Newsworld (Canada) Nov. 13. The documentary focuses on “Crimen Sollicitationis” and can be viewed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/5389684.stm> or <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1869539365648274355>.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

Sr. Christine Schenk of FutureChurch wrote an illuminating commentary in the Nov. 3 issue of *National Catholic Reporter*. “**Vatican shows a new openness to women**” is at http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006d/110306/110306u.php.

- Also note: **Pilgrimage to Archaeological Sites of Women Officeholders** in the Early Church. Rome-Ostia (plus an optional day in Assisi, Florence or Pompeii) March 13, 2007 to March 22, 2007. For details, visit <http://www.futurechurch.org/new/pilgrimage.htm>.

An editorial decision at *National Catholic Reporter* speaks volumes to all Catholics. See http://www.ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006d/111006/111006b.htm. Editor Tom Roberts said, “This is going to be a longer than usual Inside *NCR* column because I think it is essential to talk about this crisis, where it is today, why we will keep covering it, and what it could mean for us and the church at large in the future.”

Saints Are Us? Read the Nov. 1 editorial in the *New York Times* “Saints That Weren’t” by Jesuit priest James Martin who wrote, in part: “But, as some saints knew firsthand, a sincere intention is no guarantee that everybody in the church will listen -- even today. Members of Voice of the Faithful, the lay organization founded in response to the sexual abuse scandals, are sometimes barred from meeting in Catholic parishes. Local chapters often gather in nearby Protestant church halls. Who knows which future saints are lurking there?” Go to

<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=FB0810F7395B0C728CDDA80994DE404482>

BOOK Review: VOTF Chair of the Priests' Support Working Group John Ryan reviews Fr. Donald Cozzens' book *Freeing Celibacy*.

COMMENTARY

“Thomas Merton on Ecclesial Reform and Renewal” – Fr. Patrick Collins, VOTF

A response from Maine's Paul Kendrick of the Ignatius Group to Donna Doucette's Commentary in the last *Vineyard* “Conflict/Confrontation as Tactics” directed readers to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” The full letter is available at <http://almaz.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html>.

Letter to Readers: An Advent Invitation from VOTF

QUOTE for our time: Speaking of the Donald Cozzens book *Freeing Celibacy*, John Ryan made this comment that is true of many other issues we face as reform-minded Catholics: “It is also a ‘must read’ for those of us who need to understand the deeper theological, cultural and historical issues in the Church if we are to bring intelligence and compassion to our efforts at reform.” Bottom line – history matters!

NATIONAL News Update

In time for the USCCB meeting last weekend, VOTF sent a letter to all US bishops along with a CD comprised of the Structural Change Working Group's excellent work. Most of these materials are already available on the national VOTF website at http://www.votf.org/Structural_Change/index.html. (We will soon update this page to include all the materials on the CD.) The mailing included our revised membership brochure. (The brochure is available on our website at http://www.votf.org/Who_We_Are/VOTFMembershipBrochure.pdf). If VOTF members would like copies of the CD or brochure please contact Angela Tragos at ahope@votf.org or call the office at 617-558-5252.

The **Legislative Accountability Advisors (LAA)** consists of VOTF members with experience in legislative efforts and the **Financial Accountability Advisors (FAA)** consists of financial experts. Both of these advisory groups have dedicated themselves to the following:

1. To provide resources and “on-call” support that will bolster affiliates' campaign efforts
2. To share campaign successes and lessons learned with other involved affiliates
3. To make suggestions for how to revise the campaign plans as new information presents itself

If you need help or advice with regard to a legislative campaign, please contact a Protect Our Children Campaign Leader in your state. For assistance with a financial accountability campaign please contact a Financial Accountability Campaign leader in

your area. You can also contact the LAA directly at byrne351@yahoo.com or the FAA directly at VOTF_FAA_SUPPORT@yahoogroups.com.

A special thank you to the advisory groups member who are listed below.

(Eileen can you add Patrick Collins and remove Joseph Kern from the LAA list on our website http://www.votf.org/2006/advisory_groups.html I sent and email to the FAA head to confirm those names)

LAA Members: Tom Byrne (Cleveland, OH); Patrick Collins (Douglas, MI); Chuck Miller (Montgomery County, MD); Judy Miller (Montgomery County, MD); John Moynihan (Boston, MA); Bob Schwiderski (Twin Cities, MN); Ed Wilson (Brooklyn, NY)

FAA Members: Brenda Hackett (Wayne, PA); Joe Harris (Seattle, WA); John Hauter (Chicago, IL); George Perkins (Fall River, MA); Brad Pritts (Ann Arbor, MI); Vicki Rector (Colorado Springs, CO); Karl Useldinger (Colorado Springs, CO)

DIOCESE/State Watch

Spokane, WA: A church divided, a diocese in bankruptcy proceedings, and priests are looking for hope: See the Nov. 10 *National Catholic Reporter* story, "Compensating for the sins of the fathers" at

http://www.ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006d/111006/111006a.php. Peter Borre of the Boston Council of Parishes made this comment: "The article on the Diocese of Spokane lays out the various dimensions of the most prominent diocesan bankruptcy now under way in the U.S. By the latest rumors in the financial world, a Spokane settlement may be in the offing, accelerated by the fact that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting last week in Baltimore; its president is Spokane's Bishop William Skylstad. The Spokane legal odyssey will set an important precedent for what will eventually happen to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles; LA, in turn, may be the watershed for Catholic America."

Brooklyn, NY: In a letter to their bishop, Nicholas DiMarzio, VOTF Brooklyn, NY joined the chorus of voices looking for a fully funded Causes and Context Study, a proposal accepted by the bishops in 2002. In part, the letter quoted Pope Benedict XVI's recent plea to "establish the truth of what happened" (for full text, go to http://212.77.1.245/news_services/bulletin/news/19122.php?index=19122&po_date=28.10.2006&lang=po) and said: "Many, ourselves included, have put forth opinions on this subject and fingers have been pointed in various directions. It is time to commence this objective, professional inquiry and, equally importantly, all of our bishops and their staffs

will need to be open and forthcoming, in the full spirit of the Holy Father's injunction. This means full cooperation, however painful, including disclosure, to those conducting the study of relevant documents."

AFFILIATE Highlight:

For the third consecutive year, **VOTF affiliates in the Washington, DC metropolitan area (Northern Virginia, Holy Trinity at Georgetown parish, and Montgomery County)** gathered on the eve of the bi-annual meeting of U.S. Bishops to witness publicly to the continuing clergy sexual abuse crisis and to grant an award of compassion to a layperson who has made a significant contribution to the survivor community. This year affiliate members and guests met at Holy Trinity to view a new documentary on the scandal. In *Hand of God*, the filmmaker (Joe Cultrera) narrates the story of his older brother and their close-knit Italian family in Salem, Massachusetts upon discovering only decades later that he was abused by a serial priest-abuser (Joseph Birmingham) of the Boston Archdiocese in 1964. As with *Twist of Faith* and *Deliver Us From Evil*, the documentary conveys the lifetime effects of abuse upon not only a young boy but also on those closest to him over the years. It also documents in depositional testimony the despicable behavior of Archdiocesan officials, including the current Bishop of Manchester, NH (John McCormack).

Attendees engaged in a lively discussion with the filmmaker about his experience in making the film, the impact upon him and his family in doing so, and public response to it. Joe is screening the film at about 10 independent film festivals around the country and abroad, and it has already won awards. PBS Frontline just purchased rights to the documentary and will be airing it sometime in February 2007. More information is available about the film and its schedule of screenings at <http://www.handofgodfilm.com>.

The DC metro affiliates recognized three local members for their dedication over the past two years in hosting Survivor Support Group meetings in Montgomery County and Northern Virginia every month (whether anyone attended or not). In fact, many survivors have participated and gained much support from these sessions as they graced us with their stories of abuse and hope. Wayne Dorrough, Bettie Eisenhour, and Ellen Radday received the 2006 Awards of Compassion.

COMMENTARY

THOMAS MERTON ON ECCLESIAL REFORM AND RENEWAL

By Rev. Patrick W. Collins, Ph.D.

[This installment is the first of three. The full text is available on the VOTF Ohio web site at www.votfcleveland.org. Fr. Collins's web site is www.vatican2.org/patrickcollins/.]

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) called for Church renewal and reform. Renewal is interior, reform external. As a first generation post-Vatican II priest, I recall the enthusiasm with which we went about implementing the insights and decrees of that Council. New winds were blowing and it was refreshing and exciting for us agents of change. At my 20th anniversary of ordination, I recall making a television program based upon what I considered to have been the principal energy of those two decades: Change in the Church.

Now, 42 years after my ordination and in the first year of my retirement, I look back and sense a missing piece. Or perhaps better said, the wrong ordering of things. We went about the external reforms but perhaps we neglected to some extent the interior spiritual renewal from which the external reforms should have flowed. We turned altars around and ordered congregants to active participation in the liturgy. We summoned laity into sharing in church governance and ordained permanent deacons. We questioned many church teachings and pressed for new theological insights. All well and good, but was all of this as well grounded as it should have been? I wonder.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL AS THE BASIS OF ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM

Vatican II is often described as a theologians' council since they had such strong input in showing the bishops fresh ways to be the Church of Jesus the Christ. An ancient dictum of our Catholic Traditions says that a theologian is one who prays and one who prays is a theologian. One person whose life affirms this aphorism is the American Cistercian monk, Thomas Merton. Merton's thoughts about the Church and its reform and renewal, born of his contemplative living and praying, can be instructive for those of us who are still striving to pursue the vision of Vatican II. His struggle to remain faithful to The Journey of Faith both in and with the Church both challenges us and gives us hope - or perhaps I should say Hope. He invites us to continue to go deeper - beyond external reforms toward interior renewal. This may have been a missing piece during the early post-conciliar years. And those continuing to pursue external reforms can learn a great deal from listening to Merton's thoughts and hopes.

Near the end of his life he wrote: "The contemplative mind is, in fact, not normally ultra-conservative; but neither is it necessarily radical. It transcends both of these extremes in order to remain in living contact with that which is genuinely true in any traditional movement." Therefore he believed that contemplatives "will not normally be associated too firmly or too definitely with any 'movement' whether political, religious, liturgical, artistic, philosophical or what have you. The contemplative stays clear of movements, not because they confuse him, but simply because he does not need them and can go father by himself than he can in their formalized and often fanatical ranks."

Contemplatives, Merton contends, "will instinctively avoid becoming enmeshed in conceptual systems." Such persons become able to live within themselves, at home with their own thoughts and to an ever greater degree independent of exterior supports. Satisfaction is derived more and more from spiritual creativeness. "He derives strength not from what he gets out of things and people, but from giving himself to life and to

others. He discovers the secret of life in the creative energy of love.” (The Inner Experience, 290-291)

Well, if all of this is true for Merton, what does it mean today to affiliate with the Roman Catholic Church in its interior renewal and external reforms? I would suggest that it means, first of all, to see Church from the contemplative perspective. In 1963 Merton professed that “The Church is fortunately a mystery that is beyond the reach of bureaucracy, though sometimes one is tempted to doubt it” (Courage for Truth, 82). For him Church reform was not primarily a political endeavor of power sharing or power grabbing. For monk Merton spiritual renewal was always primary and the reform of Church structures was to flow from that on-going interior transformation. As he wrote in 1963, “There is no question that the mystics are the ones who have kept Christianity going, if anyone has” (*Hidden Ground of Love*, 583). This is true because the Church for Merton was the Holy Spirit dwelling in and acting in and through the Mystical Christ.

When Merton became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church in 1939, his life was in a chaotic state. Early on he had been afraid of Catholicism even though he admired it. But after some serious Catholic reading, he found the Church with its clarity and certitude to be a kind of life raft in a sea of the world’s and his own confusion. After his baptism he said that he had “entered into the everlasting movement of that gravitation which is the very life and spirit of God: God’s own gravitation toward the depths of His own infinite nature, His goodness without end. And God, that center Who is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere, finding me, through incorporation with Christ, incorporated into this immense and tremendous gravitational movement which is love, which is the Holy Spirit, loved me.” (*Seven Storey Mountain*, 246) Throughout Merton’s life the Church as The Mystical Body of Christ was the principal image and metaphor energizing his ecclesial faith.

Years later, in a letter to theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, the monk described his conversion as “marked by a pretty strong and dazzled belief in the Christ of the Nicene Creed. One reason for this was a strong reaction against the fogginess and subjectivity and messed-up-ness of the ideas about Christ that I had met with up and down in various types of Protestantism. I was tired of a Christ who had evaporated” (*At Home in the World*, 22).

This initial enthusiasm for the Church was tempered over the years by experience and study. Life in the Church was not about security stemming from the right questions and answers. It was about flowing in the stream of life’s complexities with ever maturing faith and a certain detachment from the institutional Church. In 1959 he realized the purity of the Gospel often involved an admixture of error and wrong attitudes in the Church. He told a friend: “We cannot demand that our Christianity be absolutely pure... There is inevitably plenty of prejudice and cant wherever there is a religion.” Quoting Jesus, he said that in the Church the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest. The temptation is to think that the Church is without such “cockle.” Our task is to make distinctions between the good and the bad and to adjust to the reality ourselves “in order to make sure that we ourselves are wheat and not cockle. And of course the

thing is that one never can tell. Because we are not the ones appointed to do the judging. To look for an absolute assurance that one is pure wheat is to fall, after all, into the same old pharisaism.” (HGL, 387)

To D.T. Suzuki, the Buddhism scholar, Merton admitted that the Church could become a prisoner of its own formulas, laws and structures. Writing things down about the Christian faith is “fraught with ludicrous and overwhelming difficulties,” he wrote. “No one cares for fresh, direct and sincere intuitions of the Living Truth. Everyone is preoccupied with formulas.” HGL 564) He was particularly critical of the bureaucratic ways of the Vatican, claiming that, while “the Church itself is a permanent miracle witnessed to her own divine origin by her manifestly divine qualities,” the “Roman Curia does not always bear this out, unless the eternity of God is conceived as a vacuum without activity in it” (HGL, 397).

Merton’s sense of Church was much more than a matter of signing up with a group called religion as if mere gregariousness brought one closer to God. He decried such ecclesiastical gregariousness as a kind of “huddling together against God rather than adoration of His true transcendent holiness.” (HGL, 43) In 1961 the monk wrote about the Church as “the Mother of Truth.” Yet he asserted that truth cannot be equated with ecclesiastical formulas or rules nor any single school of theological thought. The Church mothers Truth by being open to all truth: “We must go straight to the truth without wanting to glance backward and without caring about what school of theology it represents.” He contended that one must seek “to find the truth of love instead of the truth of formulas ... of laws, of programs, of projects ...” (HGL, 560).

LETTER to Readers – an Advent invitation

As members of Voice of the Faithful, we recognize that liturgical preparation for the holiest seasons of the year is crucial to focus congregations on the meaning of the season. With all the commercial clutter that will soon barrage us, we developed a prayer service linking the birth of the Christ Child with all children and with the imagery of the Good Shepherd.

We believe that our beloved Church must be responsive to the least among us, those without power to protect themselves, without voice to call out for protection. This hurtful scandal in our Church affects us all but we must recognize that we are all shepherds following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. Voice of the Faithful developed this prayer service as a way for all Catholics to recognize this valuable role. We are using imagery that will focus on the protection of our children and that might serve to reach out to those who have wandered away.

We offer this Advent Gift for your consideration. Please consider sharing this prayer reflection with your pastor, worship committee, Director of Religious Education, family members and others for use during the upcoming season of Advent.

BOOK REVIEW

FREEING CELIBACY by Donald Cozzens, Liturgical Press, \$15.95, 113 pp
Reviewed by John Ryan, Bloomington, IL

Fr. Don Cozzens, author of *Faith that Dares to Speak*, and *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, has provided believers of all stripes with a persuasive, compassionate, theological, psychological, and historical set of arguments for a serious review of mandated celibacy as a condition of ordination in the Latin rite.

In nine compact, well-annotated, and readable chapters, the author builds his argument from the starting point of celibacy as a charism, as “a gift freely given by God to a person or community, for the good and service of others in bringing about the Reign of God.” He states that “we are discussing here the mystery of grace”, and that “gifts that are grounded in the grace of God simply cannot be legislated.”

There is no intrinsic connection between celibacy and priesthood, except for the fact that celibacy has been a mandated condition for ordination to the priesthood in the Latin rite since the twelfth century. Celibacy as a charism is a gift freely given to very few who are called to the priesthood, he points out. His treatment of what the experience of mandated celibacy is for priests who have not received the charism of celibacy, which would be the majority of priests, reveals a panorama ranging from out-and-out heroism to abject misery.

He writes: “Many, if not most priests, I have come to think, are reluctant to claim the charism of celibacy, even when they have led authentic celibate lives that have deepened their humanity and enhanced their preaching and pastoral ministry.” But for the majority, it is an obligation that seems “to cost not less than everything.”

The author makes the point, we reformers should note, that the priest shortage is not an argument for optional celibacy in the priesthood. The shortage of priests is a factor that makes the need for optional celibacy more urgent. But the genuine arguments for optional celibacy are grounded in fundamental theological, psychological, and historical truths.

Chapters treat celibacy as charism, as obligation, exceptions to celibacy in other rites, and even in the Latin rite, the “shadow” side of celibacy, celibacy and homosexuality in the priesthood, celibacy and power (the basis of clerical culture), and finally, the need to free celibacy from the canonical mandate as a condition for ordination.

In his final chapter, “Freeing Celibacy”, he summarizes as follows: “Charismatic celibacy will remain a great gift to the church. Mandated celibacy awaits repeal.”

While this is a most readable book, it is not what I would regard as an “easy” read. But it is a “must read” for believers who remain oblivious to the realities of what our priests experience, especially in the aftermath of the sexual abuse scandal. It is also a “must

read” for those of us who need to understand the deeper theological, cultural and historical issues in the church if we are to bring intelligence and compassion to our efforts at reform.

Note: At the invitation of Svea Fraser, Fr. Don Cozzens has accepted the role of Advisor to the VOTF National Working Group for Goal Two.

Also, see *National Catholic Reporter* on the Pope’s upcoming talk. John Allen reports: "The Holy Father has convened for Thursday, November 16, a meeting of the heads of offices of the Roman Curia to examine the situation created following the disobedience of Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, and to undertake a reflection on requests for dispensation from celibacy as well as requests for readmission to priestly ministry presented by married priests in the course of the most recent years. Other topics are not anticipated on the schedule." Go to <http://ncrcafe.org/node/668>.