

In the Vineyard

November 26, 2007

Voice of the Faithful wishes all of our readers a Thanksgiving blessed with the bounty of family and friends.

NATIONAL News

VOTF National issued a press release calling for the USCCB to address the failure of the Lincoln Nebraska diocese to implement the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. VOTF also issued a statement objecting to the expected appointment of Cardinal George to the presidency of the USCCB.

- The USCCB has elected Cardinal George to the presidency of that body. <http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/religion/647679,111307george.article>.
- VOTF was not alone in objecting to Cardinal George's election. See <http://www.theledger.com/article/20071117/NEWS/711170395/1326>.
- See Jason Berry's op-ed on the subject of Cardinal George at <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-op-berry11nov11,0,5775259.story?coll=la-opinion-center>. Jason is the co-author of *Vows of Silence: The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II*.

Two more Convention recaps: from Svea Fraser on Priests of Integrity and a reflection from VOTF vice-president Sally Vance Trembath. Go to "Disciples in Action: (Continued)".

Affiliate Notes: Vince Grenough of VOTF Louisville KY and other VOTF members spent an evening with Abbot Damien Thompson and found uncommon inspiration. Read "The Abbott Steps Out" in Commentary.

SURVIVOR Support

Reminder: VOTF Winchester MA continues a 5-year tradition with the sale of a brand new line of **Christmas cards** to benefit the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Cards sell for just \$15 for a package of 12 cards. We are selling 4 different cards: You can buy 12 cards with the same design or a mixed package with 3 cards of each of the 4 designs. Each card has the VOTF web address on the back. You can buy cards at any weekly affiliate meeting in Winchester on Monday nights, or by visiting the group's [website](#), and printing and mailing the order form with your payment. Thank you for your support! If you have any questions, contact Bob Morris at rmorrivotf@aol.com.

Congratulations to VOTF Representative Bob Schwiderski! A message from Kris Ward (VOTF Ohio) advises: Bob Schwiderski, a member of the Twin Cities Voice of the Faithful National Representative Council and VOTF Survivor Support Working Group member was honored with a surprise award at the National Association to Prevent Sexual Abuse of Children (NAPSAC) at a general meeting recently. NAPSAC is a new

organization but it is making great strides in bringing together effectively a number of voices in the fight to protect children. Website: sapn.nonprofitoffice.com

LOST and Found: We regret that one of the Convention Recaps got lost in its own neighborhood recently. The *Vineyard* of 10/29 misplaced “Discipleship for Women in the 21st Century”; the report includes the resolution currently going through its paces among VOTF leadership. Click here to catch up.
http://www.votf.org/vineyard/Oct29_2007/localfaithcommunities.html.

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

Communities around the world remember the **church women martyred in El Salvador** on December 2, 1980. To learn more about Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay woman Jean Donovan, visit <http://sisters.maryknoll.org/index.php?module=MKArticles&func=display&id=108&offi ce=article>; and http://www.mklaymissioners.org/images/pdf/news_spring2007.pdf.

Philadelphia PA: 6-8 pm Wednesday, November 28, 2007: Evening of Reflection for Christian Women Healing from Abuse. Facilitator: Nicole Sotelo, author of the book *Women Healing from Abuse: Meditations for Finding Peace* (Paulist Press). Women who have experienced abuse will learn about the stages of healing and how to integrate their spirituality with their healing journey,. The evening will also be beneficial for those who know someone who has been abused or for those who work with abuse survivors. For more information or to register, call 215.849.3364. You may also sign up at the door. Sliding scale of \$7-15. Proceeds to support the work of the Cecilian Center, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Read “**Vatican joins historic talks** to end 950-year rift with Orthodox church” at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article2880038.ece>.

Fr. Tom Doyle highly recommends a new book: *Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church* by **Lee Podles**. Fr. Doyle said, “This is one of the foundational works that is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the clergy abuse phenomenon.” The book is published by Crossland Press and is available at amazon.com.

To follow developments at the **USCCB Fall meeting** (Nov. 11-15), subscribers can read *National Catholic Reporter* John Allen’s coverage at <http://ncrcafe.org/blog/2682>.

Cardinal O’Malley’s lay panel has released its report criticizing **parish closings in the Archdiocese of Boston**. See the full story at boston.com
http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/11/16/hub_diocese_releases_reports_crit icizing_its_parish_closings/?p1=email_to_a_friend.

QUOTE for our time: "... we all need to look in the same direction - toward Jesus who wants to heal and reconcile everyone who comes to Him." *Abbot Thompson of the Trappist abbey at Gethsemani in central Kentucky. See more in Commentary.*

COMMENTARY

THE ABBOT STEPS OUT

Vince Grenough

Abbot Damien Thompson, OCSO, from the Trappist abbey of Gethsemani in central Kentucky, did something most unusual for an abbot, especially the abbot of a monastery that is founded on "strict observance." On Sunday evening, November 11, he left the abbey to speak to an audience "on the outside," at Church of the Epiphany in Louisville KY. The title of his talk was "Healing the Wounds of the Family."

He said he decided to do it because he feels there is a need for a bridge between the survivors and the Church from which survivors have become disaffiliated. He states, "That's the role we (the monks) are hoping to fulfill. It seems the archdiocese will be a focus for this union because of the encouragement of the new ordinary of Louisville, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, who has expressed his interest in moving in this direction by having recently met with members of Voice of the Faithful."

The event, sponsored by M.O.E. (Men of Epiphany), brought together about thirty men and one woman. Seven members of the audience were members of the Louisville area affiliate of Voice of the Faithful. Five of those are survivors of sexual abuse by priests. These five have gotten to know Abbot Damien because they accepted the invitation of the monks of the abbey earlier this year to come and have a dialogue. Since then the monks have issued a special invitation to anyone who is affected by sexual abuse, especially by a representative of the Catholic Church, to come there to seek healing and reconciliation.

Abbot Damien said he is deeply saddened by the current situation in which Church leaders and supporters of survivors of clergy sexual abuse are often at odds - looking at one another with distrust and anger. He said we all need to look in the same direction - toward Jesus who wants to heal and reconcile everyone who comes to Him. He thinks that the archdiocese of Louisville is an ideal place where such healing and reconciliation can happen and would serve as a model and incentive for others to follow. He expressed strong encouragement for Voice of the Faithful to continue in dialogue and partnership with Archbishop Kurtz, whom he considers a good friend and a good man.

This was not a Voice of the Faithful event but mention of VOTF came up often during the talk and during the dialogue that followed. Some of the men in the audience

admitted they had never heard of Voice of the Faithful before. Brayton Bowen, who organized the event for M.O.E., said he had never met Abbot Damien but decided to take a "shot in the dark" by inviting him. Brayton's shot in the dark caused a wonderful light to be lit.

DISCIPLES in Action (Continued)

Sally Vance-Trembath

I would like to reflect on the Liturgy at the Providence Convention and I shall do so with two purposes in mind. The first purpose is for those who were not there. So many of the people who work so diligently for our mission and goals, that is for the healing of our beloved Church, do not have the resources and or the time attend such events. The second is for those of us who were there. For those people I would like to pour some water on the roots that began to grow in Providence. During Eucharist, when the human and the divine are so deeply united and when their intimacy is so richly evident, I saw two glistening reason why VOTF exists.

I saw a child singing at Mass. I saw a wise, grown-up pastor preside at Eucharist.

Let's cast our gaze first on Grace Romanello who was singing with her mother Christine in the small choir that Michelle Jacome had gathered to serve our community. Michelle serves the community at Mary Freeman's parish in Providence and she served our VOTF community with grace and care. I was sitting in front of the choir and thus was able to see small Grace standing with her mother singing. The Church is the community who acts differently because they know from the inside out that they were created by God and are loved by God. Grace and Christine Romanello are now in the catalogue of images that I am able to bring to prayer. They have been my companions in prayer in the days since the Convention because they were an intense example of that community who acts differently because of God's love.

Of course this is the deepest truth of all reality and so we are born knowing about God's love. But we are also born with that profound capacity for imitation that has animated the work of saints and sinners alike. When we imitate the best of those who have gone before us and we do so within the mystery of the Eucharist, we become a small communion of saints. Sometimes within the liturgy itself, we get glimpses of sanctity. I saw two on Saturday night of our Convention. I saw a young girl singing in the choir with her mom. And she was singing her heart out and as I watched her I noticed that she knew the songs. She was a member of the choir, not a place holder, not a by-stander. She was a three and a half foot tall minister of music just as surely as my other glimpse, Fr. Joe Creedon, was a 6 ft tall minister of the Eucharist.

Fr. Joe Creedon was the glimpse of sanctity for me in the liturgy. One reason I was able to notice Grace and her mother is because a wise and vibrant and grown-up pastor had called the Church to prayer. Is this not just why the Voice of the Faithful emerged? Because we want skilled, gifted, careful pastors who will guide us in our activities for the sake of Jesus' reign? Because we want children to fall in love with the Eucharist the way most of us fell in love with it after Vatican II when we were welcomed into the ministries that Fr. Creedon takes so seriously and plans so carefully. I was a lector and when I asked him where he wanted me to place the Scriptures once we arrived at the altar, he did not say, "it does not matter" or "do what you usually do." He said,

"Let's go see." I went happily because I have fallen in love with the liturgy and I know when I am in the hands of a master presider. Fr. Creedon knows what his responsibility is to the Eucharist and he fulfilled it. He was a "visible sign of an invisible presence." Our Church shrivels without such pastors.

What is so remarkable about this scene of a careful pastor and a singing child? Of course it should always be the case that the pastor opens up the liturgy with a profound sense of mystery. Of course he should call all ministers of the Eucharist to service with all deliberate care. Of course children and their mothers should sing in the choir. May I suggest that we ponder these people as images of VOTF's deepest reason for being? Let's keep in mind Aquinas' distinction between remote and proximate causes. Of course, VOTF exists to heal broken people, a bruised priesthood and a bleeding Church. These are the proximate causes that animate our work. But the remote cause is that glittering scene of Fr. Joe and a child singing.

They are the emblem of the Church we love. They are the stained glass and the mason-work of our day. Without them, our way of being Christian will disappear. That is why we have lifted our "Voices."

It is the reason we exist, so that children can be formed in the liturgy by pastors of great skill and even greater faith. Of course that is true. It is also true that every single sandwich I ever made for my children should have been made with all the love that I have for them. We all know that there are lots of sandwiches and gallons of orange juice that were concocted with neither the care nor attention to their deepest meaning. And yet we all know that meaning: all those sandwiches and glasses of juice often so hastily made were teeny bits of love for our hungry children. They were the visible signs of our often far too less visible love.

In 2002 we discovered that there had been children who had opened their voices and who had begun to fall in love with the Church. Instead of wise, grown-up pastors, many of those children encountered predators who were ready to devour that love they way the awful Dementors do in Rowlings' deeply liturgical books. Our great Catholic tradition tries to train us to be the people called by God in Eucharist so that when we make our next messy peanut butter and jelly sandwich we might do so with a greater awareness of its sacramental power. Our Liturgy also trains us for the more gritty challenges that our love of all children demands of us. We must heal this Church for them. We must make sure that the all the Graces will have a place to sing with their moms.

PRIESTS of Integrity – Who Are They?

Svea Fraser

Who are the Priests of Integrity?

The Providence Convention presented the opportunity for honoring three priests who have exemplified the courage and compassion expected of leaders in our church.

Because of time constraints it was not possible to fully present the reasons for the three priests being selected. Beginning with this issue of *In the Vineyard*, one of the priests will be highlighted, followed by an introduction to the remaining eight priests who accepted nominations and are also worthy of note.

The nomination/selection subcommittee of the Goal Two National Working Group included Joan Bedosky (NY), Svea Fraser (MA), Vince Grenough (KY), Doug Roach (FL) and Elizabeth Warren (TN) who had the daunting responsibility of identifying a priest for this award.

Support for priests of integrity is problematic because integrity should be built-in. And selecting those for public acclamation is even more difficult: Never was it our intention to assume the role of judge, for judgment is ultimately God's. We made our decision with prayer and caution, with the awareness that not only are we to judge ourselves by the same standard, but also knowing that there are many priests of integrity who toil tirelessly without seeking any special recognition. I might add that none of the nominees sought this public honor, and some shied away from it entirely.

Recognizing priests of integrity is important for both priests and lay people. It tells all of us that the courage and authentic pastoral commitment of what appears to be a few is indeed possible for many.

We are in great need of leaders who live their faith—and most particularly those who do so with compassion and courage. By the example of such priests, we hope and pray that other priests will speak up, as well as all the rest of us: To them we say, “We stand by you and thank you for doing so. Ultimately, the greatest honor we can bestow on you is to imitate your courage and compassion.”

It proved impossible to name just one Priest of Integrity, and so we honored three priests at the Convention. They are Monsignor Ken Lasch (St. Joseph's Parish, Mendham, NJ), Fr. Richard Reissmann (St. John-Holy Angels Parish, Newark, DL) and Fr. Steve Stanbery (Pastor of a rural parish in New Bavaria, OH).

Tom Doyle, OP, our first recipient of the Priest of Integrity award was unable to attend. His remarks were read by David Clohessy (National Director, SNAP):

“You are being honored today because you have done what has unfortunately become extraordinary in today's Catholic church. You have stood with the People of God even when it meant standing up to the injustices and the narcissism of the institutional office holders. If anyone can rightly be called leaders in the Church today it is the three of you. Your clear and consistent message of word but above all of living example is the most eloquent form of preaching the Gospel. I am honored and privileged to be able to add my own words of recognition to those of so many others. The powerful example of just the three of you is restoring honor and credibility to the priesthood and to Christian witness at a time when the silence, fear and apathy of so many in the clerical world, and among the laity as well, are reducing it to irrelevance.

The nightmare of clergy sexual abuse and hierarchical cover-up has brought out the very worst among the hierarchy and the laity, epitomized by the radical misunderstanding of what the Church is really about...the heresy that obsession with the institution and its

hierarchy is more important than justice and compassion for the countless people scarred by sexual and spiritual abuse. The three of you have done more by your action to restore the perception that the Church is truly the People of God than the hollow words of those who talk of reform yet succumb to fear. I salute you for your courage and above all, I salute you for restoring life to the Gospel in our day.”

We begin this “Priest of Integrity” series with Monsignor Ken Lasch.

Among some of the many comments made on his behalf are the following:

“Fr. Lasch is the retired pastor of St. Joseph’s in Mendham, NH. He was then and continues to be a vigorous advocate for victims. As a pastor, he literally dragged his bishop to a meeting with seven altar boys, all victims of former pastor James Hanley, to listen to their stories. This event was well documented and commented upon in the press and by one victim in particular, Mark Serrano (SNAP). The bishop seemed to have a change of heart and did not object when the Millstone Memorial was erected on parish grounds. Father Lasch’s persistence in going to the press when stonewalled by his bishop cost him the lasting fury of the diocesan leaders.”

Father Lasch earned a doctorate in Canon Law at St. John Lateran University in Rome, Italy. He is one of the founders of Project Millstones. He has spoken at VOTF gatherings, supported survivors unhesitatingly beginning in 1985, and he continues to speak out both for survivors and the reforms of Vatican II. . Google him for more information, or, better yet, log onto his website at www.fatherlasch.com.

Ginny Hoehne is one of the many nominators of Fr. Ken, and as the mother of a son abused by a priest in Ohio, she gave a passionate introduction with a photographs of both her son and Fr. Lasch displayed. Since Fr. Ken was not able to be with us in person, she read his letter to the gathered assembly. At the same time, she had him listen on the telephone so he could be part of the presentation. He could surely hear the applause on his behalf, but couldn’t see the standing ovation he received at the end!

NEXT ISSUE: Fr. Richard Reissmann

Followed by Fr. Steve Stanbery

And then the other priests who were nominated, not as widely known but also deserving of our recognition:

Brennan, Pat
Hammer, Bill
Hatch, David
Josoma, Stephen
McGee, James
O’Connell, Michael
Schmeider, Mark
Stasker, Louis

.

Past recipients include:

2002 - Tom Doyle, OP

2004 – Fr. James J. Scahill

2005 – Msgr. Lawrence Breslin

February, 2007 – Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

October, 2007 – Msgr. Kenneth Lasch, Fr. Richard Reissmann, Fr. Stephen Stanbery