

# In the Vineyard

November 2, 2006

“The chief problem in my view, however, is that Benedict typically focuses on the sin of the abuser to the exclusion of the sins of the overseers—the bishops—whose actions enabled those abuses to propagate like a virus.” *David Gibson, author of The Rule of Benedict. See [Interview with David Gibson in this issue.](#)*

IN this ISSUE:

## NATIONAL/Global News

**Pope Benedict XVI speaks out with force on clergy sexual abuse:** "It is important to establish the truth of what happened in the past, to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent it from occurring again, to ensure that the principles of justice are fully respected and, above all, to bring healing to the victims and to all those affected by these egregious crimes." For the complete text, go to [http://212.77.1.245/news\\_services/bulletin/news/19122.php?index=19122&po\\_date=28.10.2006&lang=po](http://212.77.1.245/news_services/bulletin/news/19122.php?index=19122&po_date=28.10.2006&lang=po). See more about the context of the Pope's remarks under [DIOCESE/State Watch - Ireland](#)

**Fall Actions in the Accountability Campaign** are touching most parts of the U.S. [Find out](#) what's going in *your* state. If your state's not listed, contact your affiliate leader [here](#).

*In Brief:* **VOTF** welcomes a new affiliate in the diocese of Youngstown, Ohio with the addition of the Mahoning Valley Affiliate; **VOTF withdraws participation** at the upcoming annual gathering of CTA – VOTF president Mary Pat Fox explained the officers' decision in a [letter to leadership](#) on 10/30; CORRECTION – The 10/19 issue of *In the Vineyard* moved Delray Beach to California (in [DIOCESE/State Watch](#)). Delray Beach remains in Florida. Thank you to Ed Hill for the catch and apologies to readers.

**The Congressional scandal around Rep. Foley** is advancing a global consciousness of the impact of the Catholic Church's handling of clergy sexual abuse. The Mediterranean island of Malta is only the most recent country to join this never-ending story. See more in [DIOCESE/State Watch](#).

- Visit our website home page for recent VOTF statements, including a joint **release with SNAP** calling on legal authorities to investigate former Congressman Foley's abusive priest; and the VOTF statement on the Congress/Church parallel.

Churches might be going back to school to learn **Financial Accountability**. “Roman Catholic universities are offering management courses to lay church workers and clergy. The *Chicago Tribune* story is at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chicago/chi-0610270245oct27,1,4294269.story?coll=chi-newslocalchicago-hed>.

- Speaking of financial accountability, parishes around the U.S. continue to grapple with financial “blind spots.” The *Chicago Tribune* updates one such instance in Chicago where bail has been set for a pastor accused of parish theft: Go to <http://www.chicagotribune.com/services/site/premium/access-registered.intercept>;

the *Palm Beach Post* noted the difficulty of parish oversight. Read [http://www.palmbeachpost.com/search/content/local\\_news/epaper/2006/10/15/mla\\_ACCOUNTABILITY\\_1015.html](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/search/content/local_news/epaper/2006/10/15/mla_ACCOUNTABILITY_1015.html).

The breakdown in communications between priests and **Cardinal Egan in the Archdiocese of New York** is indicative, arguably, of the greatest hurdle for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – the absence of dialogue. (See New York coverage under DIOCESE/State Watch.) Meanwhile, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez addressed that very subject and its critical place in the life of the Church. The bishop made his remarks at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. See **Quote for our Time** in this issue.

**Setback for lay ministers?:** Catholic News Service reports: “At the direction of Pope Benedict XVI, extraordinary ministers of holy Communion will no longer be permitted to assist in the purification of the sacred vessels at Masses in the United States.” Read more at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0606058.htm> and EWTN at <http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=72631>. A 2004 response on the EWTN site clarifies terminology: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Liturgy/zlitur15.htm>. Also, see the USCCB site at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/current/chapter3.shtml>.

“US bishops will vote next month on a proposal to release one-third of the money earmarked to study the causes of clergy sexual abuse of minors in the States.” Go to the *Universe* (a Catholic Weekly newspaper) at [http://www.totalcatholic.com/universe/index.php?news\\_id=1818&start=0&category\\_id=5&parent\\_id=0&arcyear=&arcmonth=](http://www.totalcatholic.com/universe/index.php?news_id=1818&start=0&category_id=5&parent_id=0&arcyear=&arcmonth=).

## **DIOCESE/State Watch:**

**VOTF Ireland** stated their expectations from their bishop (as he headed to Rome for his *ad limina* visit) to the vocal objections of fellow Catholics; **Malta** – the Maltese diocese will investigate the priest involved with US Rep. Foley; tragedy continues to unfold in **Mexico** and Los Angeles, CA; **VOTF New York** responded to the noise heard ‘round the world when Cardinal Egan, Archdiocese of New York, received an anonymous letter from priests in the diocese critical of the Cardinal’s diocesan leadership; **Springfield, MA** – Fr. Scahill (2005 VOTF Priest of Integrity Award recipient) and VOTF’s John Bowen of Longmeadow, MA address what the Church might learn from the Foley scandal; VOTF was a participant in a collaboration of voices at a recent **Ohio** Parishes United gathering; **Los Angeles, CA** - \$10 million later, abuse cases are settled; **Boston, MA** – Cardinal O’Malley breaks a rule and wins applause from the community; **Louisville, KY** – the Courier Journal reports that the Archdiocese of Louisville has released its final accounting of more than four years of sexual-abuse related litigation to the cost of \$29.7 million. **AFFILIATE NOTE:** Need some ideas for your gatherings? Visit the VOTF Winchester, MA ([www.votfwinchester.org](http://www.votfwinchester.org)) web site for a recent lay-led faith-sharing group discussion and much more, including VOTF note cards (Christmas cards will be available soon).

## COMMENTARY

“Conflict/Confrontation as Tactics” – Donna Doucette, VOTF Boston

“What Bishops Can Do to Help” – Fr. Tom Doyle

**BOOK Notes:** David Gibson’s much-discussed book *The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle with the Modern World*. David and his publisher HarperSanFrancisco (a division of HarperCollins Publishers) have provided *Vineyard* readers with an interview about this first critical look at the current papacy. Look for a VOTF book review on *The Rule of Benedict* in the 11/16 *Vineyard*.

**QUOTE for our time:** “Basically, I have learned the importance, yes, the necessity for the Church to be always in dialogue. The bishop has to be the model, the catalyst and the one who promotes dialogue in his diocese. The challenge is how to be an authority without being authoritarian. For the bishop, dialogue happens in the balance of listening and teaching, engaging and leading, to establish a community of justice and love in the name of Jesus Christ.” *Bishop Ricardo Ramirez speaking in August at the Tenth Anniversary of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. Go to <http://www.nplc.org/commonground.htm> for the full text of the address and to learn more about the work of the National Pastoral Life Center.*

### *Interview with David Gibson*

Author of *The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle with the Modern World*, HarperSanFrancisco, 2006

[For a VOTF review of David’s book, read the next issue of *In the Vineyard* on Nov. 16.]

*How has Benedict addressed the clergy sexual abuse scandal?*

One of the most encouraging aspects of Benedict’s papacy—and an extension of the latter days of his tenure at the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith—was his “conversion” from a conspiracy-minded skeptic regarding clergy abuse to an appalled churchman who acted to discipline abusers. That was most evident in his action—however ambiguous—that forced the Mexican priest and founder of the powerful Legionaries of Christ to retire. The chief problem in my view, however, is that Benedict typically focuses on the sin of the abuser to the exclusion of the sins of the overseers—the bishops—whose actions enabled those abuses to propagate like a virus. Benedict has made it clear he is not open to reforms in the governance of the Church.

*What are the challenges facing the church? And how will Benedict address them?*

There are so many challenges facing the church, as there always are. But I think the decline in religious vocations is truly perilous, endangering our access to the sacraments and our ability to evangelize, to have a presence in places where Catholics have so much to offer. Instead we are closing churches. But Benedict shows no inclination to do anything except pray, which is always a requisite. But contemplation must be followed

by inspired action and imagination. While I range across many of these related topics in *The Rule of Benedict*, I think the fundamental challenge in the end is one of ecclesiology—of making the Catholic Church a credible and desirable home for the faith of a new generation. Benedict constantly wags a finger at the “secularized” West which has “abandoned” the Church. But another way of looking at it is to see the institutional Church as having alienated believers who will go elsewhere, or nowhere. Exhorting people to greater piety can produce some lovely sermons. But it is not an answer to the crisis of the Catholic Church, except to the cadre of self-styled “orthodox” who feel welcome—and unchallenged—in the Benedictine church.

*What impact will Benedict have on the religious lives of American Catholics?*

The pope’s greatest impact on the religious lives of American Catholics is most likely to be in the appointment of bishops. Bishops are really the ones who can make the most immediate impact “on the ground,” and there are encouraging signs. The appointments of Archbishop Niederauer to San Francisco and Archbishop Wuerl to Washington were well-received, and deservedly so. But much remains to be seen. A “reform of the reform” in the liturgy is coming, and that conservative shift will have an impact. And by not addressing issues—the clergy shortage, the lack of transparency and accountability, the role of women, and the like—Benedict will also be affecting the American church by allowing problems to fester.

*You note that the center of gravity in the Catholic Church is rapidly shifting toward the Southern Hemisphere—to Africa and Asia and Latin America and away from North America and Europe. Why then did the cardinals elect an elderly German theologian? And what does it mean for Catholicism in the developing world?*

The election of Joseph Ratzinger was seen by many as the West’s “last chance,” and indeed it seems highly likely that the next pope will hail from the Southern Hemisphere, probably Latin America. But by forestalling that shift for who knows how long—Benedict could certainly live 10 or 15 years—and by electing a pope with little engagement with the social justice issues that are life or death for the majority of the world’s Catholics, the Church is facing a real risk. The priest shortage is absolutely dire in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and threats from Islam, inroads from Protestant proselytizers, and the urgent problems of poverty and human rights should not have to wait out a decade of a “stay-at-home” pope who gives erudite lectures on the challenges of secularism.

*Is there a danger that the Catholic Church could become too focused on internal questions and lose sight of its mission to evangelize?*

That is always a danger, and one I try to keep in mind. But the reality is that internal renewal and outward evangelization go hand in hand. The Church cannot propose itself as a moral beacon to society and to would-be believers if it is also not a true community of faith and justice.

*Why did the College of Cardinals choose Joseph Ratzinger as the new pope, and why did it happen so quickly? Do you think the system for electing a pope needs to be changed?*

The short answer is that it came down to a choice between Cardinal Ratzinger and Everyone Else. After the huge outpouring for John Paul II, the intense pressure facing anyone who would take his place, and the relatively long time the cardinals had already spent in Rome for the funeral, the cardinals wanted to go with a sure and safe bet—a known quantity like Ratzinger. But that also gets at the issue of the current conclave system. Despite the efforts to ensure a truly deliberative conclave, there was actually little useful engagement by the cardinals of the many challenges facing the church, and no time to consider other options or possibilities. That gave the cohort of cardinals of the Roman curia—predominantly conservatives—a major advantage in securing a quick victory for their champion. That hardly seems like a good way to run a papal election.

*Have you been as surprised as some by Benedict's relatively uncontroversial first year?*

I think the surprise registered by many—on both the left and right—was perhaps a case of misplaced expectations due to Ratzinger's reputation as the “Bad Cop” of Catholicism. Many conservatives were disappointed that he did not come in breathing fire and rooting out anything and anyone tainted as “liberal.” Many liberals took his first, rather irenic encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, and his slow, deliberative approach to changes and breathed a sigh of relief thinking, “Well, he's not as bad as we thought.” In short, what you have in my view is a case of, “same guy, different job.” Benedict is still Joseph Ratzinger, but as pope he knows he has to be more of a pastor. Still, I think my analysis—and subsequent events—show that he is also not going to allow anyone in the church to “color outside the lines.”

*Pope John Paul II was a “showman of God” and Pope Benedict most certainly is not, how do you think this affects the way Catholics around the world relate to him, especially the younger generation that JP II focused on?*

John Paul was in many respects the perfect pope for our Age of Celebrity, and that worked enormously well in making him extremely popular. But that popularity also masked many of the persistent problems that worsened during his reign, and which need to be addressed. But also, John Paul made us realize again that whatever the perils of celebrity, it is also important to have a convincing evangelizer as pope—a Saint Paul as much as a Saint Peter. Benedict will certainly be popular, as he is a sympathetic, avuncular figure to many. But will they follow him? When Ratzinger was elected pope, it was said that John Paul filled the piazzas and Benedict will fill the churches. It cannot be a case of one or the other, but both. There must be a free flow between those two arenas in order to renew both the church and the world.

*In the chapter titled Pontifex Maximus, Pontifex Minimus, you state that John Paul was a philosopher and Benedict is a theologian. Can you explain why this is important to consider and how the enduring split affects the future of the Catholic Church?*

John Paul's passionate, never-ending engagement with the world and with people was so typical of his approach, that of the philosopher asking questions and going wherever he could to inform himself through experience, and then to provide the answers he found in the light of the Faith. Benedict remains a theologian, the academic he has been all his life, interested less in engagement than with teaching the answers he has been given, the basics of the Faith. It is evangelization as catechesis. That can produce some very interesting discourses. But what will that mean to a generation that insists that lovely words must be matched by deeds, and that the experience of the faith—the heart as much of the head—is their gateway to holiness? Catholicism will remain a vibrant and viable choice for many, but for the near future that will be due to the efforts of those in charge of great parishes and ministries.

## **DIOCESE/State Watch**

### ***INTERNATIONAL Update:***

#### **VOTF Ireland**

*VOTF Ireland's Sean O'Conaill reports on a disappointing outcome of a VOTF Ulster meeting. The good news follows Sean's report.*

Catholics in Northern Ireland have been under challenge for centuries from the politically dominant Reformation Christian traditions, so they tend to be very defensive of their religious leaders. This complicates the life of VOTF there, because ideas like accountability and transparency, and Vatican II thinking on the role of laypeople in the church, are less familiar here than in the US.

This explains why, as Irish co-coordinator for VOTF, I was seriously challenged at a public meeting on Tuesday 24th October in Derry for our decision to send to Rome a critical report on the leadership of Dr. Seamus Hegarty, the bishop of Derry - who is also in Rome in late October for this year's Ad Limina visit of all Irish bishops.

As we had agreed to listen to any questions and criticism that people might wish to put to us, we allowed a strong lobby in favour of the bishop to tell us at length exactly what they thought of us - which wasn't much. We weren't quite dumped in the river Foyle, which flows past the City Hotel where our meeting was held, but our heads were left ringing to accusations of embarrassing Dr. Hegarty when in Rome, and dividing our church.

On a more positive note, we got some enthusiastic new members, and a reputation for rocking the boat - and are not in the least abashed. After all, Catholics have always been rebels here.

Our report, abridged at [www.votfi.com](http://www.votfi.com) records, among other things, what we see as inaction by the bishop on a plan to provide church support for all victims of sexual abuse, outlined in the Irish bishops' document of February 2005 "Towards Healing". We

also complain about his inaction in providing “structures of belonging” for laypeople in the church, called for in Ireland by Pope John Paul II in 1999 at the last Irish Ad Limina.

I was personally present when Dr. Hegarty undertook in 2003 to move to an implementation phase on proposals for collaborative ministry that emerged from a five-year consultation process - a promise that remains unfulfilled to this day.

Our report went to the Congregation for Bishops, which manages every Ad Limina visit. Pope Benedict XVI, who will have met privately with Bishop Hegarty at some time during the visit, will address all the Irish bishops on Friday 28th. That address will be read with unusual attention in Ireland, where a series of clerical child sex abuse scandals since 1994 has accelerated a secularising process accompanying an economic boom on most of the island (though not yet in Derry).

The pope is likely to urge the Irish bishops to attempt to stem this secularising process somehow - but it is difficult to see how this can be done without introducing all over the island what we say is needed in Derry – structures of participation and accountability that will enable the whole church community to address the challenge our bishops themselves threw down in 2005.

Vision isn't lacking among our bishops collectively, but follow-through most definitely too often is. The embarrassment of a bishop seems to us a relatively minor error, set against the urgent need to restore our church's reputation for integrity and compassion for all victims, including the too many victims of clerical sex abuse.

We are still reeling a bit after the public meeting, but not in the least repentant for testing the theory that, if not downwardly accountable, a bishop can be, where necessary, upwardly accountable. We wait with great interest to see what will follow. This just could be an important moment in the development of the Irish church.

Certainly it will be crucial for VOTF in Ireland. The usual clerical requirement of lay deference to authority got us predictably nowhere in our mission, and our reservoir of politeness was eventually exhausted this summer as the crisis of our church, and of its victims, deepened.

[Pope Benedict's response to what he heard during the Irish ad limina visit was immediate and strong. See the full text of the Pope's remarks at [http://212.77.1.245/news\\_services/bulletin/news/19122.php?index=19122&po\\_date=28.10.2006&lang=po.](http://212.77.1.245/news_services/bulletin/news/19122.php?index=19122&po_date=28.10.2006&lang=po.)]

For more on this story, go to the *Irish Examiner* at <http://www.irishexaminer.com/irishexaminer/pages/story.aspx-qqqg=ireland-qqqm=ireland-qqqa=ireland-qqqid=16492-qqqx=1.asp> and

#### **MALTA**

Associated Press reports that the Diocese of Malta is launching an investigation into the relationship between US Rep. Foley and Roman Catholic priest Anthony Mercieca. See

[http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/10/20/europe/EU\\_GEN\\_Italy\\_US\\_Congress\\_Scandal.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/10/20/europe/EU_GEN_Italy_US_Congress_Scandal.php).

The story was also picked up by CBS News at

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/10/20/ap/politics/mainD8KSCOUO0.shtml>.

SNAP notes on their web site a 10/22 *Boston Globe* story suggesting that Church immunity in Mexico is eroding. Go to

[http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2006/10/22/abuse\\_cases\\_exit\\_shadows\\_in\\_mexico/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2006/10/22/abuse_cases_exit_shadows_in_mexico/)

### **Tragedy continues to unfold in Mexico and Los Angeles, CA**

“For two decades, dozens of children have accused the Rev. Nicolás Aguilar of molesting or brutally raping them. He faces an indictment charging sexual abuse in Los Angeles and at least five formal complaints in Mexico. Yet at 65 he remains at large, still working as a priest in villages here.” Subscribers can read more in the *New York Times*, Oct. 21, at <http://travel2.nytimes.com/2006/10/21/world/americas/21mexico.html>. Also, see coverage in the *Vineyard* issues of Oct. 5 and 19.

### ***NATIONAL Update:***

#### **VOTF New York, NY**

*Statement from Voice of the Faithful New York on the Public Exchange of Charges and Accusations between His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York, and some Clergy of the Archdiocese of New York*

Voice of the Faith New York deplores the unseemly and unChristian public exchange of charges and counter-charges between Cardinal Edward Egan and the priests of the Archdiocese of New York that has spread through the media over the past two weeks.

A letter circulated anonymously by a committee of priests gave voice to serious concerns about the state of communication between Cardinal Egan and the priests of the archdiocese. These issues are shared by concerned members of the laity, as the membership of Voice of the Faithful New York will attest. It is unfortunate that the concerns expressed in the letter were undercut by the anonymity of the source. Nevertheless, all Catholics of New York, clergy and laity alike, would benefit from more frequent and more open communication with our spiritual shepherd.

After calling a meeting of his Priest’s Council to discuss the letter, Cardinal Egan issued a statement affirming his availability to meet with members of the clergy. Sadly, Cardinal Egan then felt impelled to issue another letter, which rapidly and inevitably found its way into the media. In this letter, he charges that the instigators behind the original letter were priests accused of sexual abuse or their supporters, without offering any support whatsoever for this accusation.

Since when does a cardinal archbishop in the Catholic Church defend the reputation and good name of our beloved church by issuing wild, sweeping smears of his clergy? Cardinal Egan holds the most powerful Catholic microphone in the greater metropolitan area, but he has hardly ever bothered to turn it on. Now, after four years of virtually absolute silence from him on the scandal that has afflicted our church since 2002, years in which members of the laity called on him again and again to speak to us about what has been termed the greatest crisis of the Catholic Church in America, we get to read news stories of him slandering his own clergy with unsupported accusations?

He singles out only one priest by name, Msgr. Howard Calkins, a priest of great integrity who spoke to the press in haste about the first, anonymous letter. Many members of the laity and clergy know and respect Msgr. Calkins, and while he may have spoken in haste, he spoke from his heart about the need for greater openness and communication in our community of faith. We respect him for his honesty, and we vow to defend him against attacks.

We call on Cardinal Egan to desist from issuing vague allegations, which can only serve to harm the church he seeks to protect. We encourage him to follow through with his announced plan to meet with members of the clergy at the vicariate level. We ask him to make these meetings open forums and to invite interested members of the laity to attend, so that we all can work together to restore a climate of trust and mutual respect to the Archdiocese of New York.

For more on this story, go to the *New York Times* at [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/26/nyregion/26egan.html?\\_r=1&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&adxnmlx=1161864688-WPMMZZH47edHbSZHIMNSiA](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/26/nyregion/26egan.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&adxnmlx=1161864688-WPMMZZH47edHbSZHIMNSiA) and the *New York Post* at [http://www.nypost.com/seven/10252006/news/regionalnews/egan\\_blasts\\_mutiny\\_regionalnews\\_dan\\_mangan.htm](http://www.nypost.com/seven/10252006/news/regionalnews/egan_blasts_mutiny_regionalnews_dan_mangan.htm).

**Springfield, MA:** While Congress and the Roman Catholic Church are sharing the sexual abuse spotlight at the moment, VOTF's 2005 Priest of Integrity Award recipient Fr. James Scahill noted, "Leadership protecting its power at the expense of the truth and the protection of children in both instances. St. Michael's [East Longmeadow, MA] parishioners were the first ones to shake the trees, and our children are safer." In the same *Republican* article, John Bowen of VOTF Longmeadow expressed his hope that bishops will understand one thing – people cannot be fooled forever. For more on this story go to <http://www.masslive.com/metroeastplus/republican/index.ssf?/base/news-2/1161678232114910.xml&coll=1&thispage=2>.

#### **OHIO:**

On Saturday October 14<sup>th</sup>, Catholics from parishes in the Toledo Diocese gathered to listen to a diverse group of speakers from all over Ohio talk about their experiences and activism within the Church. Emily Holtel-Hoag of Future Church, Claudia Vercellotti and Tony Comes of SNAP, Kristine Ward of Voice of the Faithful, and Dan Thiel of United Parishes were all featured during a conference organized by United Parishes under a theme stating that "Together We Can." The conference didn't focus on the differences between these groups. Instead it emphasized the common ground we all share in love of our faith, and a sense of calling to speak up about matters of grave importance to the Church.

This conference was about uniting those of us called to accept that challenge so that we may continue to educate, organize, and empower ourselves to do the work that needs to be done in the days ahead. Topics ranging from parish closures, sexual abuse, priest shortages, and accountability were all raised and explored in great detail. According United Parishes, each of these issues stems from a need for a Church which can be trusted. That requires accountability and willingness from Church leadership to trust lay people with the ability to provide responsible stewardship.

United Parishes, Future Church, SNAP, and Voice of the Faithful all look forward to future collaboration and organized efforts to reach out to Catholics who wish to have a voice in these issues and others that will affect the Catholic Church in the future. For more information, you can go to [www.unitedparishesohio.org](http://www.unitedparishesohio.org).

**Los Angeles, CA:** A \$10 million settlement for seven victims of clergy sexual abuse was reported in the *New York Times* on Oct. 27: "While the amount per victim is large relative to payments made to settle sexual abuse cases in other parts of the country, it is typical of the sums paid in California, which has taken a strong stance toward the Catholic Church in abuse cases." Subscribers can access the full story at [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/28/us/28settle.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/28/us/28settle.html?_r=1&oref=slogin).

**Boston, MA:** A *Boston Globe* editorial reported a little rule-bending by Cardinal O'Malley but few are complaining: "THE ARCHDIOCESE of Boston broke every rule in real estate sales this week when it voluntarily halved a \$2 million offer from a community group for the former Our Lady of the Presentation elementary school in Brighton's Oak Square. It was a brilliant lesson from Cardinal Sean O'Malley on how best to strengthen a community." Go to [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/editorials/articles/2006/10/21/church\\_bulletin/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2006/10/21/church_bulletin/).

**Louisville, KY:** "The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Louisville has released its final accounting of more than four years of sexual-abuse related litigation that rocked the church and cost it \$29.7 million. Archbishop Kelly said, 'I would not use the expression "closing the books." I'm hoping that we have reached the victims. They are the primary concern in all of this. I hope we've got them all, but if we haven't, the door is always open and we're always anxious to help with counseling if we can.'" See the *Courier Journal* at <http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061019/NEWS01/610190406/1008>.

## COMMENTARY

### Conflict/Confrontation as Tactics

*From Donna Doucette, VOTF Boston and Region 1 New England National Representative Council member*

On various VOTF discussion lists and affiliate meetings, the tactics of conflict and confrontation are frequently called our best tools or even our only tools for dealing with bishops. Occasionally those promoting such tools as the primary "weapons" of VOTF see their use as inevitable; they position them as part of a healthy debate where diversity of opinion and constructive engagement can lead to reform.

I would like to explore the notion that conflict and confrontation are somehow equivalent to diversity of opinion and constructive engagement.

They are not. And the confusion of those elements, as if they are two sides of the same coin or as if they are simply a matter of semantics, is part of what I see as the continuing problems the National Representative Council (NRC) encounters as we try to build a Council sub-community that works collegially with other sub-communities in the larger VOTF community.

Although one might label differing opinions as being "conflicting," or conclude that constructive engagement resulted from "confrontation," the tactics of conflict/confrontation differ significantly from ones that support opinion-diversity/constructive-engagement.

Conflict and confrontation carry the connotations of strife, of establishing winners and losers in a struggle. They are quite suitable for sporting events, for warfare, and for any dispute where there must, inevitably, be a winner and a loser.

But diversity of opinion need not result in the anointing of a winner or a loser. It may lead instead to agreement on certain principles in common. It may result in a third option that meets the needs of all concerned. It recognizes that there are multiple views, that each has some value, and that a "common good" approach need not eliminate all opinions except for the one that "wins."

Constructive engagement, likewise, implies that through discussion and the positing of different opinions, one arrives at a conclusion that embraces and advances the goals of those involved even if neither "side" in the discussion is declared a "winner."

The demand for winners in a conflict, the constant use of "angry forever" voices, to me seem antithetical to the aims of VOTF. Do we need to confront what is wrong? Yes. Certainly. Do we need to do that in a winner-take-all atmosphere? Do we need always and every time to reach for the tools of conflict and confrontation and label as foolish or frivolous those who prefer a different starting point? Must we always insist on a confrontation that will label us "losers" if we do not obtain capitulation of the hierarchy to our "demands"?

I hope not. Tactically, it is far better to point to gains, to improvements, than to trumpet the fact that we stood toe-to-toe with Bishop X, called him a retarded moral pygmy, and then retired to our "camp" to boast of how we spoke only the truth.

Our wins, our gains, when they come, will be on the ground, in the parishes, in the dioceses. They will not come with the public capitulation of the bishops. So why keep demanding it? Call for truth, take steps to see that it is revealed, but insist on the changes that will make our parishes and dioceses safe for our children, and will lead us to communities that embrace the voices of the laity.

The Church did not formally condemn slavery until 1965. That's 1,965 years (give or take a few hundred when "church" was not "institution") during which the official teachings of the Church declared slavery to be "natural." But my guess is that not a single one of us

held onto slaves until 1965. We changed on the ground, as it were, long before the institution of the Church got around to acknowledging the truth of what exists.

VOTF, as an agent of change, should be making our changes on the ground, not waiting for the institution to acknowledge what we know to be the truth. Instead of shouting the truth to a deaf hierarchy – continuous conflict and confrontation -- I prefer to change our church according to the truth and let the hierarchs catch up later, if they will.

## **What Bishops Can Do to Help**

*Thomas Doyle - October 17, 2006*

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia put on an event a month ago that was billed as an opportunity for the bishops and priests to hear firsthand the stories of clergy abuse victims. One mother of two sons who had been abused spoke as did two adult victims. The cardinal and his auxiliary bishops were present along with several hundred priests. The archdiocese called the evening “Witness to Sorrow”. Cardinal Rigali is quoted as saying that *“It is extremely important for us to hear their stories firsthand so we may see the human face and hear the human voice.”*

The *Delaware Times* ran a story about the event. The headline read *“Let the victims be heard in court.”* Ronnie Polaneczky started her story for the *Philadelphia Daily News* with the line, *“Whatever this gesture is supposed to deliver, it’s way too little, way too late.”* Edd Conboy wrote his column under the heading, *“When doing nothing may be better than doing something.”*

Is their cynicism justified or is it a knee jerk reaction to *anything* the official Church tries to do in response to the never-ending clergy abuse nightmare?

Looking at this event in context, I’d say their response is both cynical and realistic. The event was planned by the archdiocese, no doubt with major input from their public relations experts, to create an appearance that would serve as a distraction from the fact that the archdiocese is still stone-walling victims in court and working to defeat any meaningful changes in State legislation that is favorable to victims of sex abuse. The benevolent image projected by the Cardinal is a far cry from the vicious attack by the archdiocese and its lawyers on the grand jury report, which was called, among other things, “anti-Catholic bias.”

The priests who had sexually assaulted the two victims and the children of the mother who spoke were members of religious orders, not archdiocesan priests. This was an all-too-obvious attempt to minimize the far-reaching abuse perpetrated by the archdiocesan priests. The grand jury report named only 63 but in reality they looked at cases involving over twice that number.

I spoke to the husband of the mother who spoke about the abuse of their two sons by a Norbertine priest. He was not impressed and told me that the cardinal did not interact with his wife or the victims after the event.

“Witness to Sorrow,” like many similar events sponsored by dioceses across the country, comes nowhere close to responding to the need for the clergy to interact with the victims. The archdiocesan press release said. *“One of the most significant things [Rigali] has learned in the past year is the importance of listening to victims who are able to convey the hurt, pain and suffering which is still part of daily life for many of them.”* That statement is remarkable. Why would any clergyman of any rank *not* know that listening to the victims was an all-important aspect of the necessary response to them? The clergy caused their pain. Bishops made this pain worse by denying or minimizing it and now they think that one evening of listening to two victims and a suffering parent is going to justify the years of cold silence and active denial?

The true measure of any churchman’s commitment to listening, understanding and healing is not to be found in orchestrated public relations events but in day to day action. This action should be seen by all as a solid commitment to helping and healing the direct victims of clergy sexual abuse as well as all those who suffer from collateral damage. This means feeling the sting of their anger and trying to sense the depth of their pain and anguish.

The official church and its clergy are masters at show. We regularly put on elaborate liturgies to commemorate everything from papal coronations to earthquakes. Such events may provide an emotional jolt but they don’t change anything and they surely don’t constitute a substitute for authentic pastoral action. The many healing liturgies and other events similar to “Witness to Sorrow” are viewed by many as too little, too late or even an insult to those grievously harmed by the Church through sexual abuse. These men and women are individuals and not simply members of a group or nameless faces in a congregation. It’s easy for a bishop, archbishop, cardinal or pope to make a public statement of apology or expression of sorrow at the nightmare the clergy have caused. It’s not quite so easy to meet one-on-one with the victims and certainly not so easy to support legislative change or civil court action that will either reduce the likelihood of future abuse or provide access to the civil justice system for victims, or both. Yet that is what it takes to be truly committed to righting the unspeakable wrong done, not only to the countless victims but to the whole Body of Christ.

Pope John Paul II spoke about the sex abuse crisis several times and mentioned his concern for victims. Yet this concern was, in the final analysis, disingenuous because he made no attempt at structural change and consistently refused to even greet groups of clergy abuse victims much less actually meet with them – so too with the bishops. A tiny minority of truly pastoral bishops has crossed the line in the sand and attempted to get to know and minister to the victims. Only in this way will they ever really come to appreciate the horror inflicted on their lives.

Being “pastoral” does not mean putting on a show, liturgical or otherwise, and then retreating to the safety of the rectory or the episcopal palace to await the next meeting with the Church’s lawyers or her lobbyists to refine strategies for keeping the victims at bay or defeating any meaningful legislation that would guarantee them the justice not provided by the Church.

The bishops can and should do what we have all learned from the Gospels...be present to the suffering. Countless victims have said over and over “*If only someone had come to me, listened, believed and even apologized.*” Yet this is precisely what the bishops *have not done*. It’s not too late to start and in so doing, the official Church and its bishops might begin to rehabilitate the trust that has been shattered by the obsession with institutional image rather than the suffering members.