

In the Vineyard

October 25, 2007

This issue of In the Vineyard includes summaries of some of the Convention presentations. To get even closer to the action, go to Resurrection Tapes at www.resurrectionC.com or write to ResurrectionC@gmail.com for DVD and audio replays of most of the sessions. Here are some quick numbers from the Convention:

- Over 500 attendees from XX states (two attendees drove from Wisconsin!)
- Over two dozen workshops
- Three Priest of Integrity Awards and the Catherine of Siena Lay Person Award

NATIONAL News

See **VOTF Convention recaps** under Disciples in Action

Read the **VOTF National press release** “VOTF Urges Bishops Not to Elect Cardinal George”

Fr. Richard McBrien calls VOTF to leave the Church better than we found it.

In his address to a packed house Friday evening Fr. Richard McBrien complimented Voice of the Faithful on the Convention agenda. He called for us to keep the pressure on and to not write off all of the bishops. He affirmed our identifying celibacy as a contributor to the culture of secrecy which led to the cover up of the abuse crisis. For a good summary of Fr. McBrien’s talk, go to http://www.projo.com/news/content/faithful_meet20_10-20-07_K87IDVL.3275835.html

EDWINA Gateley opening address on Saturday drew clamorous appreciation.

Gateley’s brand of public speaking is well known for the energy – both physical and intellectual – that she brings to an audience. As more than one attendee said, “She’s contagious – I haven’t felt this energized in quite a while.”

Gateley’s talk began with a lesson in recognition. “Following Jesus, hmmm. Pretty radical. Take away all the piety and hype ... and you end up with a man who was a problem for both the secular and religious systems of his time; a social outcast in his culture; a rebel, an oddity, a trouble maker, a rabble rouser, a political problem and, ultimately, a convicted felon!!!!”

She went on to note that “something” in Jesus – His “inner authority” characteristic of mystics and prophets – resonated with so many around him. He was touching *their* inner understanding. Giving voice to these depths isn’t on the surface of our lives – it is in the desert places, Gateley said.

“What we so often forget is that agendas impelled by justice belong to God, and will unfold in time frames beyond our frantic plannings and desirings Our task is to be

faithful to the unfolding of God's ways, and yet remain expectant.... The voice of the faithful is birthed by God and must not be stilled – and neither must you, as Voice of the Faithful, be stilled.”

See upcoming issues of the Vineyard for more on Edwina Gateley's talk. Meanwhile, visit her web site at www.edwinagateley.com. To schedule an event, attend a retreat or receive a brochure on this minister, speaker, poet and writer, contact edwinagateley@aol.com or write to Edwina Gateley, 229 Eagle Point Blvd., Erie PA 16511.

ADVOCACY AWARD news! Congratulations to David Clohessy, national director of SNAP -- Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, who has received the Lifetime Achievement in Advocacy Award from the Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma. David has been working with abuse survivors since the 1980s. In addition to representing SNAP at the Providence Convention, he also led a forum on ways VOTF members can work effectively to support legislation that helps survivors.

SNAP's Fall Newsletter is available in pdf. Go to

<http://www.snapnetwork.org/newsletters/September%202007%20Newsletter.pdf>

SITE-seeing, Etc.

The Los Angeles Archdiocese newsletter “The Tidings” published an informed and informative response to “What do I say if an adult tells me he was abused years ago?” Go to <http://www.the-tidings.com/2007/101907/abuse.htm>.

An “uncommon overture” from Muslim scholars to the Christian community is drawing a mixed response – from welcome to caution. See The Tablet

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/articles/10512>.

QUOTE for our time: “We seem to be undergoing a dark night in the Church, not the first in history and probably not the last. This darkness is not a mystery given the frantic efforts by some to slam the windows and nail down the shutters after a bit too much of the fresh air introduced by John XXIII at the instigation of the Holy Spirit. As at the first Pentecost, difference is a primary sign of that Spirit. Until the institutional part of the Church can learn to embrace and value difference, it will be primarily the responsibility of the rest of the Church to do so. Thank God for theologians like Phan and others. The Holy Spirit cannot be stopped and it is up to theologians to make Her presence felt in times like these.” Anthony Christiansen, OFM, as quoted in the current issue of *National Catholic Reporter* following commentary on Georgetown theologian Fr. Peter Phan's recent talk. Fr. Phan is under investigation by US bishops and the Vatican for his book *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interreligious Dialogue*. Subscribers can see NCR coverage at <http://ncrcfe.org/node/1369>.

Convention workshop presenters and facilitators are invited to provide recaps of their gatherings at the Providence RI convention “Disciples in Action” held on Oct. 19/20.

This issue of In the Vineyard and future issues will incorporate as many of those summaries as we receive.

DISCIPLES in ACTION

Why Not Elect Our Bishops?

Catholic Christian communities interpret the fourth “mark” of the church -- apostolicity -- *sacramentally* as well as *conceptually*. In other words, that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic refers as much to certain sacramental behaviors attaching to ordination as to the content of the message proclaimed by the ordained.

Dr. Joseph O’Callahan told a packed room of more than 100 people, that the fact of apostolic succession still left open the question of how candidates for bishops were selected. Throughout the early history of the Catholic Church, in fact, the bishops were elected rather than appointed by the Pope as they are today. Also in contrast with such early elections, today’s process in the Roman and Orthodox Catholic churches leaves the selection up to the hierarchy. Other bishops first identify the candidates for prospective bishops and then propose them for consecration. Sometimes those bishops assessing candidates are higher up the hierarchical ladder -- archbishops, metropolitans, cardinals, the Pope -- but no one lower than a bishop is a direct participant in the process either of candidate identification or of actual selection.

Dr. Kern Trembath shared his first hand knowledge of how Anglican Catholics in the United States are distinctive in that they hold firmly both to the sacramental nature of apostolic succession on the one hand, and to full ecclesial participation in the selection of bishops on the other. He summarized the rigorous process by which Anglican dioceses identify aspirants and candidates for the episcopacy, one of whom is then elected with the full participation of laity and ordained.

Recalling and Enlivening What Vatican II Asks of Us

In "*Recalling and Enlivening What Vatican II Asks of Us*," Anne Southwood, a chair of Voice of Renewal/Lay Education working group, suggested a Johnny Appleseed approach in searching the call of Vatican Council II. Workshop participants sifted the documents produced by the Council through a lay lens. Seeding action in our own and other fertile Catholic hearts was the focus. The goal was to recapture and employ the mission-oriented self-understanding of Church pulsing through the documents. The overarching goal is to continue seeding mission for baptized Catholics. Handouts were given those attending.

After highlighting the importance of understanding and “owning” the only Ecumenical Church Council likely in our lifetime, the workshop moved to the operational phase through discernment. The method: “How does it speak to me” and then “What does it ask

of me?” Methodology and results from a model created and presented in Southern Massachusetts were used. Documents chosen included “The Constitution on the Church”; “The Constitution on the Church in the World”; the “Apostolate of the Laity”; and the popular document of American contribution, “Religious Freedom”.

Other parish workshop participants had created document outlines which were distilled into “trigger” lists of mandates or concepts that spoke to them. Previous ideas for adoption or action prompted further ideas in Providence from creative VOTF members, who don’t need a coaxing “Speak to me - it’s ok!” plea. One participant later said it was a pleasure to focus on what it really means to be a baptized Christian, to interact and generate ideas with like-minded Catholics.

Called to BE Church: A participatory pastoral planning process

“To provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church.”

This mission statement of VOTF could also serve as description for the ongoing pastoral planning process which the Diocese of Albany, New York has undertaken. “Called to BE Church” is a two-year process which Bishop Hubbard calls “an opportunity for imagining and creating our future...focused not on structure, not on buildings, not in personnel statistics but on mission.”

The process began with diocesan-wide town meetings held in every parish last year in October and November. “Loosening the soil” conversations on the broad topics of “Mission” (October) and “Ministry” (November) encouraged thoughtful and collaborative initial identification of issues and sensitivities.

Following these large meetings of all parishioners, core teams were formed in each parish and the Local Planning Groups (3-5 parishes in each group) began to meet with facilitators in a carefully planned series of monthly two-hour meetings. Each meeting begins and ends with prayer and has a carefully scripted focus on an aspect of parish life and ministry: evangelization, life-long faith formation, service ministries, sacramental life of the church and models of leadership. Delving into these topics in depth not only elicited many ideas for ongoing change and implementation, but also helped all the core team members develop skills of collaboration and consensus.

In the last phase of the process, from January to June of 2008, the conversations will shift to more practical items of Church administration and then actually preparing a detailed recommendation for the Pastoral Planning office.

Concurrent with the monthly facilitated core-team discussions, the general parishioners were kept informed about the ongoing conversations through bulletin inserts, some further “town” meetings, and extensive coverage in the diocesan newspaper, *The Evangelist*.

While no process involving so many issues and people could be free of flaws and frustrations, the “Called to BE Church” undertaking is a model of participatory pastoral planning that encourages the kind of active lay involvement which VOTF’s mission statement calls for. Throughout the diocese, dedicated lay people have sat down once a month without fail to ask themselves, “What do we need to do to ensure that the mission and ministry of Jesus is a lived reality here, now and in the future?”

The presentation at the Convention workshop gave an overview of “Called to BE Church” and provided examples of both the subjects and process that was used at meetings. Additional details are available to all on the Albany Diocese website: www.rcda.org.

Presented by Sheila Peiffer, Campus Minister at Academy of the Holy Names, Albany, NY and facilitator for the Called to BE Church process. She is also a member of the VOTF National Representative Council from Region 2.

The Nature of Authority in Local Faith Communities

Moderator Michael Marnik provided a brief introduction on objectives of the panel and an introduction of each of the participants. Fr. Bill Clark of the College of the Holy Cross started off with an ecclesiological discussion of the origin and nature of authority in local faith communities and its relationship to the universal church. Fr. Clark spoke about the local church as the “event” of the universal church (Rahner), and the idea of authority as a *relationship* that maintains communities. He also discussed how authority in a local faith community flows from authenticity, that is, the state of being in touch with the underlying principles upon which the community is based.

Sharon Harrington, Margaret Roylance and Ronnie Mitchell then told their stories about what happened in each of their local faith communities in Massachusetts (St. Albert the Great in South Weymouth, Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Newton and Bridgewater State Catholic Community in Bridgewater, respectively) when they came into conflict with their diocesan leadership and what the outcome in each of the communities was. As part of questions/discussion at the end of the panel, common themes or lessons learned were addressed. The group discussed elements that tie the three stories together and those that distinguish them. The spiritual foundation of the actions of the communities was an important element, as were the forces which act to tear a community apart when conflict with hierarchical authority occurs.

DISCIPLESHIP for Women in the Church of the 21st Century

A large crowd gathered to hear presenter Professor Mary Doyle Roche of Holy Cross College (Worcester MA) address the subject of women’s discipleship in a global climate of devastating assault on women and children. Doyle’s message reminded attendees of the profound effects of injustice toward women *anywhere*.

Rich Moriarty (VA), NRC representative from Region 4, and Peggie Thorp (MA and *Vineyard* editor) spoke about the resolution they are co-sponsoring with former NRC representative Mary Collingwood (OH) on the subject of women's roles in the Church. Attendees responded favorably to the presentation and many forwarded a request to their NRC representatives to consider the proposal. Questions from the audience noted concerns about the reception of the Church among children and young adults of the Church both in its faith and in its practice.

The resolution (worded below) was considered the following day by the NRC, which approved its distribution to membership and officers for their consideration. The vote was 16-8.

RESOLUTION Wording:

Whereas, our Church is the entire People of God; and

Whereas, the future of the Faith we are called to sustain is dependent upon a supporting structure inclusive of the voices and talents of all the People of God; and

Whereas, we affirm the VOTF mission statement (to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church) and third goal (to support structural change within the Catholic Church); and

Whereas Voice of the Faithful at our founding identified several factors that may have contributed to the sexual abuse of children and an attendant cover-up, including the absence of women across the spectrum of leadership in our Church; and

Whereas, the deterrence of future abuses by the hierarchy is dependent on addressing those contributing factors identified by Voice of the Faithful at its founding; and

Whereas Voice of the Faithful's pursuit of justice for survivors invites the pursuit of justice throughout our Church; and

Whereas there is within our Church a structural fault line in the marginalization of the lay voice in general and women's voices and gifts in particular;

THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED THAT:

Voice of the Faithful calls for Church-wide re-examination and reform of the role of women in Church ministry and in the governance of the Church.

CANDLELIGHT WALK of remembrance in support of survivors followed the Saturday evening liturgy at the Convention. Winding from the 5th floor of the Rhode Island Convention Center down to the river, attendees braved strong winds to keep their candles alight, and then paused for songs and prayers in support of the survivors before returning for a final forum about ways to support legislation to protect children.

BishopAccountability.org includes in "New and Noteworthy" a "publicly filed petition by Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of Providence" that "provides a new and shocking admission

regarding the diocese's total number of accused priests." The documentation indicates a number twice the total noted by the Providence diocese in 2004. Go to

http://www.bishop-accountability.org/docs/providence/2007_01_09_Young_v_Gelineau_Tobin_Petition_Certiorari/Tobin_01.htm.