

VOTF AND SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE PRIESTHOOD

I believe there is a direct relationship between sexual politics in the priesthood/hierarchy and any reform group's ability to change the church. The key to VOTF's survival and success lies in backing the right issues, understanding the needs and culture of the priesthood/hierarchy that owns and controls the church, and being relentless in the art of polite public confrontation that exposes sexual and financial improprieties and compels other Catholics to join and support you for change through strategic action.

Sexual politics in the priesthood/hierarchy

The myth of sexuality in the priesthood is that it is comprised overwhelmingly of straight men who are 99.9% sexually chaste in faithfulness to their promise/vow of celibacy. Mandatory celibacy is part of the power base of the priesthood/hierarchy. Because it serves a political function, a priest's sexuality is not private, but a public issue. Catholics have been taught to honor and support priests because they profess to have forgone a traditional family to lead sexually chaste lives in prayer and service to the people of the church. That's the ideal. The reality is quite different.

For centuries, gay men have been beaten, burned at the stake, tortured and killed for being whom God made them. They have suffered great loss personally and collectively. Like any group of persecuted people, they have sought safe places to hide and thrive. The priesthood, with its public and mandatory promise/vow of celibacy, became a perfect haven of safety and instant respect for gay men. It serves them well because it's socially acceptable for them not to marry a woman and they live in-close with other men - somewhat beyond suspicion. They enjoy a comfortable lifestyle replete with the adulation of parishioners who have been taught to believe in the myth of total sexual abstinence within the clerical celibate lifestyle.

Gay men's common history of suffering and the search for belonging, especially post Stonewall (google "Stonewall Riots" for background), has created a strong camaraderie among gay men in the priesthood. A core goal of the gay rights movement is to build political alliances that provide for the safety and well-being of the gay community. The common and well grounded fear of violence and persecution from straight people not only helps strengthen this bonding among gay men in general, but has also generated new political realities in the priesthood.

With the developing politicization of the gay rights movement and the widespread portrayal in our electronic media and literature of gay men as heroic yet still victimized by straight culture, much compassion has developed for the cause of gay rights. And rightly so. However, this compassion has superseded common sense and critical thinking at times. In certain venues, anyone attempting to criticize the shortcomings of a gay man and his leadership potential in a church setting can find himself or herself the target of a piranha-like attack from gay-friendly supporters. I think it is important to maintain a healthy balance between compassion for gay people and the realities of Catholic Church clerical gay politics.

Of the many effective gay priests I know, there are also those gay priests in leadership positions who lack the personal strength and qualities to provide balanced leadership that always finds the best solutions for the church. The worst gay church leaders I have met have been terminally narcissistic and vindictive towards anyone who might call them to task. The classic “power and control” explanation for their takeover and abuse of church power is a correct analysis in a general sense, but lacks the nuanced sexual politics specificity that many Catholics sense but find difficult to identify, articulate, and challenge. The need for clerical control has been expressed at the sexual level as well, and sometimes, unfortunately, with children and young people. I have spoken with gay survivors of clergy sex abuse. Often, their first sexual experience as confused gay teens was with the priest who was counseling them. The priest decided to “comfort” the teen by taking him to bed. That is abuse, statutory rape, and a legally prosecutable breach of a superior-subordinate relationship. Those priests belong in jail.

Priests who lead secret, active sexual lives are also open to blackmail and extortion. Those who abuse children are criminal manipulators by trade. They will use any means possible to gain access to children and then work to be protected once they have abused. When a predator priest finds out that Bishop Bill and Father Fred went on a gay cruise together last fall out of Miami, the bishop is compromised. The threat of outing makes Bishop Bill a compliant secret sponsor of the abuser. Is homosexual politics in the priesthood the sole cause of the sexual abuse crisis? No. Does it play a central role in the complex reality of the sexual abuse crisis? Yes, it does.

A number of gay priests of integrity have also left the clerical ranks in recent years. They have done so in many cases because they have rejected the sexual politics they have encountered and have a desire to lead a sexually authentic life with a partner/spouse. We have a number of partnered priests who are members of our Celibacy Is the Issue (www.rentapriest.com) group to which I belong. These priests need to speak out and share their spiritual journeys with you and the wider church populace.

What is the percentage of straight versus gay priests in the Roman or Latin rite of the priesthood? The few studies that exist estimate a gay population of anywhere from 10 to near 70 percent. Why the inconclusive spread? The hierarchy has successfully resisted any comprehensive third-party study of the sexual orientation of the priesthood. Why won't the bishops allow a full and open analysis? What do they have to hide? This same culture of clerical secrecy was encountered by journalists, police, and insurance investigators trying to get to the bottom of the clergy sex abuse atrocity. What are the bishops fighting to protect this secrecy?

There are indicators that point to the reality of a politicized homosexual majority in the priesthood and its hierarchy.

Richard Sipe has been researching sexuality in the priesthood for over 40 years. He is a psychologist and educator who recently co-authored *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes* with Tom Doyle and Patrick Wall tracking the nearly 2000-year history of abuse in the church. After reading *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes* I understood more clearly the issues that drove me out of my chosen profession of parish priest. One of Sipe's latest research areas is the sexual orientation of bishops and how this impacts the inner workings and policies of the Roman Catholic Church.

Richard and I exchange emails and he has posted some of our correspondence on his website. The following webpage from his site discusses priestly sexuality and provides a revealing list of papal and episcopal sexual orientation:

http://www.richardsipe.com/Click_& Learn/2006-08-01-Sexual_Orientation-4.html

It is my opinion that today's priesthood/hierarchy is over 50% gay. That number brings significant political power and influence to the group of men who legally own and direct our institutional Roman Catholic Church in the style of a medieval oligarchy.

The early church that was closest to Jesus was family-based and leadership was shared by women and men. According to Acts 15, it was a democratic church where everyone had a voice. We have an established history, a clear precedent, of a married priesthood in our tradition that was suppressed at the Second Lateran Council in 1139. Women were also priests in the early church for the first 500 years. (Torjesen, K. J. *When Women Were Priests*. Harper San Francisco. 1993) Despite parish closures and the reduction of sacramental ministry to the Faithful, the current hierarchy has reaffirmed that celibacy will stay, and no discussion is even allowed concerning the ordination of women. Given the dire need for more priests to drive our sacramental ecclesiology, what is the hierarchy really trying to safeguard and protect? Why do they limit membership in the priesthood only to men who promise not to marry women? We all know the standard answers we get from the Vatican in response to these questions about mandatory celibacy. Does the reality of a politicized homosexual majority in the priesthood/hierarchy change your perception concerning the motivation for these official reasons to maintain mandatory celibacy for priests and exclude women and married persons from the inner sanctums of church power?

In chapter seven of his book, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, Donald Cozzens provides varying information about the percentage of gay/straight men in the priesthood and seriously discusses the thesis that priesthood is a gay profession. The theme of homosexuality in the priesthood is a far from understated in his writing. It is a constant thread in this book.

I recently spoke with a respected journalist who has interviewed a number of Roman Catholic religious leaders – arch/bishops, religious provincials, etc. I told him of my interest in researching homosexuality in the priesthood and its political ramifications. He told me up front that he was gay and stated that all but one of the religious leaders he has interviewed recently are gay men. When I asked if, in his opinion, the priesthood was a predominantly gay profession, his response was “Yes. Most definitely.”

I was contacted by a “researcher” a few months ago, likely a journalist or an author, who is trying to document the transfer of funds from arch/diocesan bank accounts to gay rights organizations. She found some of my writing on the Internet, was impressed with my frankness, and thought that I could help her find a way to get through the organizational barbed-wire fences protecting such information in the institutional church. I told her up front that I had no magic wand to help her get this data. As I asked her more specific details about her project, she politely wound down the conversation and thanked me for my time. People are tracking this issue of

sexual politics in the priesthood – at a number of different levels.

Like many married Roman Catholic priests, I have witnessed first-hand the practical consequences of the predominance of homosexual leadership in the priesthood. During my eighteen years in the seminary/priesthood a number of priests declared their love for me and invited me to bed. The most surprise kiss I ever received was from a priest. I heard many straight priests complain over the years how they were excluded from projects or promotions/assignments because they did not take part in the social and sexual activities of the gay majority. They were excluded and left behind because they were not gay.

As a young priest, I was very impressed with an older priest, Father Patrick. He was an excellent homilist, erudite, well-read, and witty. I wanted to get to know him better. I was a young priest looking for a mentor. We developed a friendship and spent hours discussing theology, etc. One night he asked me to sit down for a talk. He began the conversation by saying: “John Fitzpatrick and Patrick Fitzjohn.” At first, I laughed at his apparent play on words. Then it hit me (remember my name is John) and I understood what he was really saying. I started to feel nauseous. I was scandalized in the truest and deepest sense of the word. He just looked at me because the ball was in my court. He had come out to me and invited me, in not too subtle code, to engage in anal sex. I recovered enough from the shock to shake my head “no” in response. He ignored me from that day on.

I was an idealistic seminarian. I believed that once I graduated from the predominantly gay Midwestern seminary of the 70’s that I would be with the real, professional, and dedicated priests who lived the ideals I had learned in my Catholic upbringing. (My contacts in the priesthood tell me that the seminaries are still predominantly gay.) I quickly learned that there is a well-developed gay network in the priesthood and homosexual activity is a litmus test for franchise-level participation in the power structure. Something broke in me that day with Father Patrick. With hindsight, I have come to believe that mandatory celibacy has become a political tool used by gay men in the priesthood to sustain their safe haven and their financial and sexual arrangements. In today’s church, celibacy does not work to promote the Kingdom of Heaven, but to serve a small and secret kingdom right here in plain sight on earth.

It makes clear sense why one out of every three priests has left the corporate priesthood to marry – they were slowly and methodically driven out by the pervasive majority gay culture. Many straight priests were scandalized by the double standards they witnessed and they left the sexual corruption they encountered to start a new life. Married priests are usually described as having “left the priesthood to marry.” It should be more accurately stated that many straight priests decided to leave the clerical lifestyle because they found it difficult to live in a clearly homosexual environment – all men and no women. Once that decision was made, it was only natural for straight priests to marry women and get on with their lives. The gay priests stayed in the clerical system that they dominate and where they have their intimate significant-other relationships, while still publicly functioning as priests in good standing with the blessings of the Vatican.

Of the straight priests who have stayed, many have also taken to leading sexual double lives on a

permanent or sporadic basis. I know of straight canonical priests who go from woman to woman and they too are moved from parish to parish when the scandal of their abuse of position is exposed. I've talked with women whom priests have romanced with the false hope of marriage then abandoned. There are also priests out there with hidden families. Imagine the denial and stress that places on wives of active canonical priests and their children. They are forced to live double lives too. They don't deserve a life of secrecy and avoidance of the truth.

For every straight priest who has become sexually involved with a woman against his promise/vow of celibacy, I have observed three gay priests who have broken their vows with men. The straight priests tend to leave the corporate priesthood for traditional marriage life based on a spiritual model of partnership. Gay church officials stay because they own the church leadership system - culturally and legally. It protects and sustains them, and gives them a forum for love and security that is well hidden from critical view behind the veil of "celibacy".

When news of the sex abuse atrocity hit the media in 2002, do you recall the first corporate response from the US hierarchy? Their proclamation was "Celibacy does not cause pedophilia." Most people nodded in agreement with this deflection, but there was a deeper issue at play. Of all the subjects they could have addressed, why did they choose to protect mandatory celibacy first and foremost? Mandatory celibacy and the myth of sexual continence/purity is critical to protecting the gay majority culture of the priesthood. So, it makes good sense for VOTF to choose celibacy as a central issue. With mandatory celibacy lifted for priesthood, all viable candidates will be able to present themselves for priestly studies and ordination. Many are called to priesthood, but few to mandatory celibacy. The influx of married persons and women into the priesthood would dilute the predominantly homosexual power block in the church. Will the current hierarchy ever allow that to happen?

Given the sexual purity ethic that is fibrously embedded in the fabric of our faith, the Catholic in the pew doesn't want to think about these realities, much less confront them. Most won't even believe it when inconveniently confronted with its reality – and that is a major reason why the "celibacy" cloaking system continues to work so well for gay men in the priesthood. In response to the occasional emergence of this reality in the media, the Vatican responds that its priests may be gay, but they are celibate. That is a quick sound bite dodge comprised of technical language. People hear "celibacy" and they think "purity". In reality, celibacy only means that a priest has not publicly married a woman – that's the last thing a gay man wants to do. The canonical definition of celibacy focuses on public legal marriage, not on personal sexual continence for priests, although that aspect is also covered in Canon law. Most Catholics are unaware of this distinction and consequently are easily manipulated back into their comfortable, compliant pew seats.

For VOTF to be an instrument of change in the church, it is critical to factor into your strategy the fact that the corporate priesthood and hierarchy will not allow any changes that might expose or threaten the safe haven that protects and benefits its gay majority. The problem is not that priests are gay - that is accidental. The issue is that their political agenda is driving people away and contributing to problems that offset all the good things about our Roman Catholic faith. They are well aware that the Roman Catholic community will not support a predominantly gay and sexually active priesthood. They hide the reality of who they are, and the "laity", who have

lifetime investments in the religious insurance program component of Catholicism, are more than willing to enter into and embrace the illusion of priests as straight men living a life of sexual purity to retain their life long annuity investment in the promise of eternal life.

Church Reform Groups – a history of NOT changing the institutional church

There are numerous church reform groups that have come into existence since the repression of the spirit of Vatican II that began in the 70's. In all that time, none of these groups has effected any real change in the role of Catholics in the institution, transparency of the hierarchy, accountability of church leadership, or the less than chaste and simple lifestyles of priests and church officials.

The reform groups still in existence today are essentially support groups – people who have gathered in response to injury. They have developed cottage industries of information exchange – conferences, speakers' bureaus, newsletters, fundraising advertisements, national conventions, etc. These are worthwhile activities, but are only internally efficacious and operate primarily for the members' mutual benefit. They have little to do with reform.

All of these activities have helped reform-minded Catholics personally as a subset group of the Roman Catholic Church, but they have not opened the priesthood to all who are called to serve. They have not made local bishops accountable to their people for ministerial project focus, general diocesan policies, or financial decisions. Their organizations have not stopped parishes from being closed. They have not slowed the attrition of straight priests leaving the corporate priesthood or the defection of cradle Catholics to other denominations. They were not able to detect, expose, or stop decades of systemic sexual abuse of our children. Some even deny the depth of this problem and told me and other supporters of the survivor's movement in the mid 90's to stand down because "the bishops are taking care of this problem."

Church reform groups have essentially served the Vatican's objectives well. These groups provide a place for Catholics to go when they figure out what is really going on in their institutional church. The Vatican knows this and is more than willing to let reform groups exist because they play a key role in its overall control strategy. Arch/bishops will even grant audiences to, and receive studies and position papers from well-meaning reform groups. The reform group members feel that they have achieved a great accomplishment in gaining an audience with the prelate. In reality, they have simply delivered him a detailed summary report of their activities. Pleasantries and mutual good wishes are usually exchanged between the prelate and his concerned guests in these rare meetings, but in the short and long run nothing changes. At the end of the meeting the reformers have been contained and led on by their own good intentions and the false hope and gratitude extended by their local arch/bishops.

Catholics who belong to reform groups usually continue to attend their local parish churches. Each Sunday they donate money to their local church, which is legally owned by the bishop or a corporation that the bishop controls. This system of episcopal ownership supports the Vatican's agendas. There is an element of self-deception here – the idea that "I am just going to support my local parish because we have a good thing here." Unfortunately, that is part of the codependency that is required for being a good Vatican Catholic. You focus on your local parish, but your donated resources are immediately added to the bishop's balance sheet and continue to support the same mindsets and special arrangements that enabled the sex abuse atrocity to take place and be covered up by a predominantly gay hierarchy for decades. Partaking in this donation and ownership arrangement makes the laity full enablers of the Vatican agenda.

VOTF – key things to realize and do if you really want to change the church

Hope is not a strategy. If you want to change an institution, you need to use the techniques applied by people like Saul Alinsky, Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This means leafleting parishes, presenting letters to the archbishop with the media taping you for the evening news in front of his residence, and a relentless commitment to the art of polite public confrontation in multiple venues. Do you have the stomach for that as individuals and as an organization? I think you do because according to Vatican II, you are the real Roman Catholic Church. Today's Catholicism is like a good meal being served on a dirty plate. Your institutional church has been hijacked and you as a group have the ability to take it back and restore its wholeness and respect in the eyes of the world.

Don't be afraid to get into an adversarial relationship with church leadership. You will not risk eternal damnation for stepping out of the monarchical cult of personality model we have been trained in since childhood. Holding church officials accountable as equals is the only way you are going to accomplish change in the institutional church. Be pleasant, be polite, be confrontational, and go into any meeting knowing what you want to accomplish beforehand. They have their goals, so you must have yours. When they tell you that you are being a bad Catholic, you must answer that they are being bad arch/bishops.

Realize that your religious leadership is predominantly gay. Nothing is going to change unless it benefits the safety and sustenance of the gay majority that has taken control of the hierarchy and priesthood. Just as the Jewish leadership of the early church had to undergo a change of heart to open up the message of Jesus to Gentiles, today's predominantly gay priesthood/hierarchy needs to open their leadership chairs to everyone. They will only do so if they are assured of their safety and your support.

Much hope is being placed on the John Jay study about the etiology of the sexual abuse crisis that is due out next year. This study has been funded by the bishops for over \$300K. Imagine a university study declaring the safety of cell phone radio frequency radiation that was funded by a major cell phone carrier. I don't put much hope in its outcome based on some of the initial information being leaked to the media. I believe it will provide many talking points to enable you to keep driving for truth and justice in our church. You will do much better to derive your information on clergy sex abuse from researchers like Tom Doyle, Louise Hagggett, Patrick Wall, Marie Fortune, Marci Hamilton, M. G. Frawley-O'Day, and Richard Sipe, among others.

This past October, Chicago auxiliary bishop Paprocki, who is a professor of law at Loyola, addressed the legal community during a "red mass" in Grand Rapids, MI. Referring to the many lawsuits brought against priests and bishops in the past 5 years, he described the church as carrying a cross in dealing within the litigious culture of the United States. He lamented that "the Church is under attack" and declared that these attacks are coming from "the devil". No arch/bishop that I am aware of has publicly rebuffed Paprocki for his comments or made the effort to clarify where responsibility belongs for the abuse. This says volumes about the mindset of today's hierarchy. With this attitude coming from a bishop who is a law professor at a Catholic university, it is clear that our children are still very much at risk. VOTF has plenty of work to do in supporting SNAP in changing state statute of limitation laws and creating look back periods ("windows") so that today's survivors can bring their perpetrators to justice. When SNAP requests people to be present with them at government offices, local VOTF members

should ride in like the cavalry to the rescue. Since justice cannot be found in the complicit chancery offices, we must achieve it for victim/survivors in our civil courts.

Individual survivors of clergy sex abuse have found strength, hope, and inspiration from the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). VOTF has the same potential, on a much wider scope, to influence every Catholic in the pews who is confused, ashamed, and wanting to feel better about the administration and public image of their church. To gain their trust and support, you need to take concrete action to expose financial and sexual improprieties in our church leadership. I was very glad to see Mary Pat Fox quoted in two recent articles about clergy sex abuse. Every controversial article about the church should include a rebuttal statement from VOTF. You need to be available to the media to provide the other side of the story. You need to be standing up and demanding accountability of church leadership. You must require them to explain in detail what is driving their decisions. That duty of citizenship is honorable in our country and is worthy of praise and public support. That level of VOTF activity should be happening in every major city across the country. As an initial project, I suggest you support the vigiling parishes with media-attracting demonstrations of large numbers of people. Tell the world that clerical excess should not mean that communities have to lose their parish churches to pay off the legitimate restitution to survivors of clergy sex abuse by priest perpetrators and the arch/bishops that enabled that abuse.

VOTF leadership personnel who are directly or indirectly in the employment of the church are a liability to your effectiveness. The corporate world has a place for constructive criticism and progressive and successful companies welcome such from their employees. Church leadership has shown its lack of tolerance for internal reformers presenting constructive criticism and its vindictiveness in dealing with those who are not faithful to the power and control agendas of the arch/bishop. Anyone in your leadership who pays their mortgage with a church paycheck is compromised. The hierarchy will quickly bring pressure to bear upon them – either publicly or clandestinely.

The primary allegiance of the arch/bishops is not to the Catholics of the United States – it is to the Vatican. The Vatican comes first. Your needs are secondary. Your role is ancillary. Your arch/bishop's task is to manage and control you – for your own spiritual and temporal good, of course. This all happens in a friendly and spiritually coated milieu, and it is your Catholic duty to comply with the will and directives of your arch/bishop. The episcopal world is monarchical in its mindset. Your interaction with arch/bishops happens within a Machiavellian framework – not the American democratic political arena of fair play and elections every four years. American Catholics are politically bi-cultural. The freedoms you exercise as a citizen do not exist as a parishioner. Don't confuse the two and assume rights in the church that you really do not have to exercise. As a Catholic, you are a subject in a stratified monarchical church organization. Obey or pay the price.

Canon Law is about creating lines of clerical authority over church members and the punishments for crossing those lines. You will never win a contest within the institutional church using Canon Law arguments. The deck is stacked so the clerical establishment always wins over the laity in a Canon Law contest.

The church is much richer than you are led to believe. As survivors have found over the years, the bishops have almost unlimited resources to spend against any efforts that challenge their position. Bankruptcies have conveniently served as a two pronged strategy for the hierarchy – to

stop legal proceedings that will reveal unsavory details to the public and to cry poor to the people filling the collection baskets on Sunday. Church revenue comes not only from parishes, but from educational institutions, medical enterprises, retirement facilities, land holdings, investments and more. The bishops will spend money to thwart your effective witness against their shortcomings. They will spend large amounts of church money to hire legal dream teams and top-tier public relations firms to stop bad press about their sexual and financial transgressions.

You do not own your parish church or school or other real or financial asset— the bishop owns them, according to your state laws, under the corporation sole of the current arch/bishop. Legally, you are a guest in the bishop's church building. You are allowed to be there at the pleasure of your pastor and his arch/bishop. The vigiling parishes in the Boston and New York can provide fresh and specific details on the harshness of this reality. Even though you and generations of your family raised money for church building funds, you do not own your church. When you leaflet your parish, you will be asked to step off parish property and stand on the sidewalk. If you do not obey, the police will be called in by the pastor or the arch/diocesan lawyer to deal with you as a trespasser on "private property," meaning the bishop's private property.

VOTF is losing membership because the bishops have effectively co-opted your issues in the eyes of many Catholics. They've marketed their charter for the protection of children and young people and instituted diocesan "audits" to assure compliance. They are doing exactly what the donating Catholic wants to make all the ugliness go away. You must create new cogent issues that have gut-level appeal to the Catholic in the pews. VOTF is made up of a lot of sharp people. You have the brains and acumen do this effectively. You also have the Holy Spirit on your side. Once the issues are chosen, practical strategies with achievable outcomes must follow and be acted upon concretely. Never give up. Always be planning the next move. Like Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven", remember that the pursuer always has the tactical advantage and the greatest chance for success.

Push your "priests of integrity" to join you and to work with you in your new issues and strategies. This will be a litmus test for them because it will put them right in the middle of the action and push them to take a position. The real priests of integrity will do the right thing and stand with you. You'll find out who your true clerical supporters are when you ask them to join you in the streets.

Do you recall the traditional Catholic social concept of the "preferential option for the poor"? This principle has its roots in the biblical notion of justice where God calls us to be advocates for the voiceless and the powerless. The "poor" of our 21st century are the victim/survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Support them even more than you have in the past because they are today's voices crying in the desert. Use your prophetic voice—loudly, clearly, and often. Stand in the rain with the survivors when they call you for help. When victim/survivors of clergy sexual abuse achieve justice and healing, our church will be well on the road to achieve the same and regain the respect we Roman Catholics and our abundant church tradition deserve in the eyes of the world.

Respectfully,

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November 25, 2007

This entry was posted on Monday, November 26, 2007 at 3:30 am and is filed under [Abuse and Cover Up](#), [Must Read](#), [Reform](#), [Restructuring](#), [Church Culture](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

3 Responses to “Must Read: VOTF and Sexual Politics in the Priesthood”

Rob C Says:

[November 26, 2007 at 1:38 pm](#)

I am impressed with what John Shuster has written, especially about his take on the reality of the ecclesiastical culture; in particular, the gay presence in church leadership and its connection with sustaining a system of mandatory celibacy in the Latin Rite. I have never seen this written before in the same honest and frank way, yet I know the truth of it having studied it long enough and been “on the inside” for many years.

I think a better estimate of the percentage of ordained gay church leaders is around 85%. (That doesn't mean all are sexually active and it certainly doesn't mean that all are intrinsically disordered any more than all of us, in a sense, are intrinsically disordered due to original sin.)

This reality certainly influences our church's institutional culture, including the way it is led, church politics and decisions leaders make each day. The system does need to change and it will change, but unfortunately, it may not be in my lifetime. I know many people, in church leadership, clerical and lay, who would want to speak the truth - yet know that they would be severely penalized by the institution for doing so.

Changing a culture is even more difficult than changing a system - and the ecclesiastical culture is no exception. Meantime, though, we have the promise of the Spirit - and it looks like the priesthood as we know it is heading for its own dissolution.

When we look at all ministry, including ordained ministry, in terms of God's grace and shared gifts, then the false constructs and man-made laws we have made will not hold up. Then, we'll get closer to the fullness of the Kingdom, This will happen, but not yet.

Ed Menaunt Says:

[November 26, 2007 at 2:05 pm](#)

Congratulations on amuch needed excellent overall analysis of the major problems in the Church. However, I disagree about the power or future of VOTF. It is dying due to its failure to do what their mission statement states.

After the first convention my wife said that according to the presentations at the

convention that the issue of child rape and abuse was being used by different groups promoting their agenda, i.e., ordination of women, married priests, democratic constitution for the church, and increased sexual freedom.

After attending many conferences local chapter meetings I have been forced to accept my wife's astute analysis. In the past year I have observed that males and younger people were noticeably absent at most meetings. Older women were the predominant attendees.

Jim Post, the former president of VOTF, has said that maybe the time is here for VOTF to fold its tent and let other groups pursue their individual agendas.

A few VOTF chapters have been successful, i.e., the Long Island group, in curbing hierarch domination (Or at least forcing hierarchs to carefully assess their behaviors) and focusing on bringing legal sanctions to bear of financial and sexual issues, But Bishops Accountability and SNAP have done much more and successfully in the area of rape and abuse of children by both clerics and hierarchs than has VOTF

I now support Bishops Accountability and SNAP rather than VOTF. VOTF like any organization tries avoiding death and like the Old March of Dimes transforms itself. VOTF is already is attempting the transformation process by focusing on promoting the review by Rome of the issue of celibacy,