

## In the Vineyard

Sept. 21, 2007

“The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization.” *Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II “Rosarium Virginis Mariae” October 16, 2002 (full text available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20021016\\_rosarium-virginis-mariae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae_en.html).)*

### In this issue:

#### NATIONAL News:

**Fall Actions in the Campaign for Accountability** offer something for everyone. It isn't too late to join one or all of these efforts. Read the [petition](#) for accountability and sign on!. The [Rosary mediations](#) are available [here](#). Contact your [local affiliate](#) for details on how you can get even more involved

- One of the Fall Campaign for Accountability options for our affiliates is to organize one or more group recitations of the **of the Rosary**. [http://www.votf.org/2006/fall\\_campaign/Rosary\\_in\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.votf.org/2006/fall_campaign/Rosary_in_PDF.pdf) Where has the rosary been? It was so much a part of pre-Vatican II Catholic prayer life. For an overview, go to the Vatican web site at [http://www.vatican.va/special/rosary/index\\_rosary.htm](http://www.vatican.va/special/rosary/index_rosary.htm).
- **Financial Accountability** in your parish and diocese can begin this Sunday: Tamper-evident collection bags is an idea whose time has come and it is already being used. See Commentary – “Protecting Parish Finances”

The **2007 VOTF Convention** will be held at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI the weekend of October 19-21, 2007. A committee is just beginning to form so stay tuned and **SAVE THE DATE**.

**DIOCESE/State Watch:** **VOTF Boston, MA** celebrated a legislative victory on criminal SOL reform (also, see Commentary for Steve Krueger's story on this win that surprised many and provided valuable lessons); in **Long Island, NY** (Rockville Centre diocese) more than 100 VOTF Long Island members delivered a petition for financial accountability with 7000 signatures to the diocesan offices of Bishop William Murphy; **VOTF Bridgeport, CT** posted a statement on the tragic parish story of a good priest gone and another priest arrested; the diocese of **Columbus, OH** presents another example of financial mismanagement; Associated Press reports: “Cardinal Justin Rigali is calling together hundreds of priests in the **Philadelphia Archdiocese** to hear from two people who were sexually abused by Roman Catholic clerics”; **Davenport, IO** – A jury ruled against the Davenport diocese in the only Davenport abuse case against the diocese to date that went to trial. **Affiliate Highlight:** VOTF participated in a “very Catholic day” at Holy Trinity parish, Washington, DC where Ministry Day was a lively success.

**Survivor Community News:** A survivor found a parish priest who went the extra mile. Read Bob Schwiderski's story; also, see the Philadelphia archdiocese initiative on behalf of survivors in DIOCESE/State Watch.

**A case worth watching** is just getting under way in Los Angeles. The *Los Angeles Times* reports that a priest "who was suspended from the priesthood after sexual abuse claims in 1991, says disclosure of the confidential files to plaintiffs suing him over the alleged abuse would violate his rights." The priest has asked an appeals court to block the release of his church personnel file. The full story is at <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-caffee9sep09,1,5890567.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california&ctrack=1&cset=true>.

### **SITE-Seeing, Etc.**

**The Boston Catholic Men's and Women's conferences** will be held on March 17 and 18, 2007, respectively. Registration will open on November 1. See details at <http://BostonCatholicMen.org> and <http://bostoncatholicwomen.org/>.

*America* magazine, Sept. 25, published a Marci Hamilton article "What the Clergy Abuse Crisis Has Taught Us." Subscribers have access at <http://www.americamagazine.org/gettext.cfm?articleTypeID=1&textID=4977&issueID=584>.

- Also note the Sept. 18 issue of *America*: Read "Remembering Henri Nouwen" and a touching "update" on "Preaching: A Ministry (Still) in Distress."

YOU are invited to participate in a new blog at <http://www.cultureofconversation.blogspot.com/>. Its home page notes an objection to the "culture of silence" in the Church and notes its 2002 statement "Ephphatha: Be Opened" that repeated Vatican II's vision of a collaborative Church community.

*National Catholic Reporter*, September 8 issue: See Richard McBrien commentary "An episcopate anything but excellent". Subscribers can access the text at [http://ncronline.org/NCR\\_Online/archives2/2006c/090806/090806r.php](http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006c/090806/090806r.php).

**Opportunity (Fr. Walter Cuenin) knocks:** See Commentary – "An Invitation: Explore the Roots of our Faith".

### **BOOK Notes:**

The Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality was the brainchild of Sr. M. Madeleva, C.S.C. As president of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, she initiated what was a pioneering presence in graduate theology. The lecture delivered in her name is sponsored by St. Mary's Center for Spirituality; the lectures began in 1985 with Monika Hellwig's address on "Christian Women in a Troubled World." **Mary Ann Hinsdale**, IHM,

associate professor of theology at Boston College, delivered the 2004 lecture “**Women Shaping Theology**”; her talk was recently published by Paulist Press in a small, readable book of the same title and available through amazon.com.

## COMMENTARY

“Protecting Parish Finances” – Frank McConville, VOTF Boston, MA  
“An Invitation: Explore the Roots of our Faith” – Fr. Walter Cuenin  
“This Hasn’t Passed Yet?” – Steve Krueger, VOTF Boston, MA

**QUOTE for our time:** “Do you know what you have done? You have moved a mountain. That’s what you have done.” *Tom O’Neill, Boston, MA, supporter and adviser on Massachusetts sexual abuse statutes of limitations reform, when he heard about the passage of H5234. See more in DIOCESE/State Watch.*

## SURVIVOR Community News

Bob Schwiderski is a survivor and an active member of both VOTF and SNAP. He is also committed to outreach on behalf of victims of clergy sexual abuse who have been unable or unwilling to come forward. Recently, Bob went to Fr. Michael Van Sloan at St. Stephen’s Church (Anoka, MN) to let Fr. Van Sloan know that he would be handing out leaflets about a credibly accused priest who had once served in that parish. Bob's hope was that anyone “living an abuse secret” will know that he or she doesn’t have to live that way any more. Bob and Fr. Van Sloan had never met, so there was no particular expectation on Bob's part; it was to his surprise that Fr. Van Sloan took the leaflet, read it aloud at all the Masses, and directed parishioners to speak with Bob after Mass. After Mass, the priest joined Bob and members of the press who had gathered outside the church. Bob’s feeling is that this one priest did what the archbishop (Archbishop Flynn) refuses to do – go that extra mile to find “the lost sheep.” The leaflet is at [http://www.snap-greatplains.org/My\\_Homepage\\_Files/Page8.html](http://www.snap-greatplains.org/My_Homepage_Files/Page8.html). The print story and video coverage are available at <http://www.kstp.com/article/stories/S18570.html?cat=1>.

[Bob pointed out three mistakes in the print/video coverage: 1) the spelling of his name – correctly spelled above; 2) the church is St. Stephen’s (not St. Michael’s); and 3) the dates of the accused priest’s tenure are 1971-92 (not ’71-2).]

We are grateful for Bob’s ministry and the story he provided for *In the Vineyard* readers.

## DIOCESE/State Watch

**Boston, MA:** H 5234 is expected to become law in Massachusetts, as soon as Gov. Mitt Romney signs it. Bonnie Gorman and Susan Renehan, co-chairs of the Coalition to Reform Sex Abuse Laws in Massachusetts said the following:

“The scaled down version of the SOL repeal legislation that was initially introduced was combined into one bill – H5234 - with legislation that tightened laws regarding the sexual

offender registry that Community Voices helped move forward. Please go to [www.stopsexcrime.org](http://www.stopsexcrime.org) for more information.

H5234 reforms the statutes of limitations for criminal prosecution by extending the SOL from 15 to 27 years and eliminates it if there is corroborating evidence available to the District Attorney. While corroborating evidence is unusual, we believe that this conditional repeal is something that can be built upon in the future.

We may not have bridged the mountain range of hurdles in closing the “justice gap” for crimes of sexual abuse to children but we have moved a mountain. Tom O’Neill, a strong supporter and advisor of the Coalition, told us recently, ‘Do you know what you have done? You have moved a mountain. That’s what you have done.’”

Contact information: email to [bonniegorman1@yahoo.com](mailto:bonniegorman1@yahoo.com); visit the web site at <http://www.stopsexcrime.org>. For more on this development, see Commentary for Steve Krueger – “This Hasn’t Passed Yet?”

- VOTF Boston Council reports that Ben Murphy of the VOTF Boston Sidewalk Affiliate, had a Letter to the Editor published in the August 25th edition of the archdiocesan newspaper the *Pilot*. Ben was responding to an article on the hierarchy's plan to protect children. He said, in part, "The [Pilot] article indicates that the bishops have a comprehensive plan to protect young children and it is being implemented. Does this plan address bishops who were guilty of sheltering abusive priests? To this date, not one has been sanctioned and to me, that leaves the most egregious violators free to, once again, hide violators."

**Columbus, OH:** The *Columbus Dispatch* reports: “The finance director for the Columbus Roman Catholic Diocese was indicted by a federal grand jury yesterday on 23 counts of taking nearly \$800,000 in kickbacks while working in Cleveland.” Go to <http://www.dispatch.com/emailme/emailme.php?story=dispatch/2006/08/17/20060817-A1-04.html>. The *Cleveland Scene* published an article that wonders aloud about the “how” of such mismanagement. Go to <http://www.clevescene.com/Issues/2006-09-06/news/news.html>. Meanwhile Smith is on paid leave from his work in the Columbus diocese, according to the *Columbus Dispatch* at <http://www.dispatch.com/news-story.php?story=dispatch/2006/09/09/20060909-B5-02.html>.

- VOTF Cleveland member Tom Byrne said that the diocese's claims of victimization amounted to "public relations working overtime." See Bill Frogameni’s commentary in the *Cleveland Scene* at <http://www.clevescene.com/Issues/2006-09-06/news/news.html>.

**New York, NY:** The Sept. 12 *New York Times* editorial noted: “For all the post-scandal display of reform by the American bishops, they still lack the machinery to force their foot-dragging peers to face up to tougher measures to regain public trust. The vague device called ‘fraternal correction’ — a kind of buddy system that’s supposed to correct blossoming scandal — remains a toothless nonthreat.” Subscribers can access the full editorial at

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/12/opinion/12tue3.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/12/opinion/12tue3.html?_r=1&oref=slogin). Attorney Marci Hamilton's comment on the editorial follows:

“The problem with the *Times*' assessment is that the Church isn't ‘haunted by a ghostly legion,’ but rather by a cadre of living predators who are either (1) still under the radar because of the Church's continuing cover up; (2) being supported by the Church and watched by their peers, which, as the *Times* intimates, is a huge joke; or (3) defrocked and now wandering the neighborhoods of our towns and cities looking for children to groom, because the Church's cover up placed their crimes beyond the statutes of limitations. The *Times*' underlying assumptions rest on the false assumption that this is part of the past. No such luck.” Marci's web site is at

<http://writ.news.findlaw.com/hamilton/>.

*Rockville Center, NY: Newsday* reported: “More than 100 members of the Long Island chapter of Voice of the Faithful Tuesday marched from St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre to the diocesan offices three blocks away to call for the creation of an outside ‘finance council’ to watch over the diocese's finances.” Go to

[http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-livotf0913\\_0\\_3807035.story?coll=ny-line-news-headlines](http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-livotf0913_0_3807035.story?coll=ny-line-news-headlines).

**Bridgeport, CT:** VOTF Bridgeport posted a statement ([www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org)) on the tragic outcome of financial mismanagement in a Darien parish – the departure of a respected priest from the parish and the priesthood and arrest of one-time high-living pastor. The statement captures much that is awry in parishes all over the US. How does your parish fare by comparison? (Write to [pthorp.ed@votf.org](mailto:pthorp.ed@votf.org).)

**Philadelphia, PA:** Associated Press reported that Cardinal Rigali has taken a step in the Philadelphia archdiocese that could and should establish a model for all US dioceses. He called together hundreds of priests in the archdiocese to hear in person the stories of survivors of abuse by clergy. Associated Press also quoted a victim who testified in what turned out to be a devastating grand jury report on the incidence and management of abuse in the archdiocese. "But the fact is, in the halls of Harrisburg they [bishops] are lobbying against the laws that are necessary to protect children." See full coverage at the *Times Herald* web site:

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/C/CHURCH\\_ABUSE?SITE=CAVAL&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/C/CHURCH_ABUSE?SITE=CAVAL&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT).

The Philadelphia archdiocese press release and video stream of the meeting is at <http://www.archdiocese-phl.org/press%20releases/pr001135.htm>.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reports that Cardinal Rigali has launched an advertising outreach campaign for victims of clergy sexual abuse. See <http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/15512945.htm>; reactions to the planned campaign are mixed, however. See <http://www.philly.com/mld/dailynews/news/local/15514580.htm>.

[Note that one of the VOTF affiliates has suggested to their archbishop that the Philadelphia model be employed in their own archdiocese. The response from the chancery expressed an interest in considering such an initiative. ]

**Davenport, IO:** The *Des Moines Register* reports: “Scott County jury on Monday awarded \$1.5 million to a Davenport man who alleged he was sexually abused nearly 50 years ago by a high-ranking priest [who died in 1981] in the Davenport Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church. The lawsuit was the first the diocese has taken to trial since the sex-abuse scandal broke open in the Catholic Church several years ago.” To read this story in full, go to <http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060919/LIFE05/609190383/1045>.

## **AFFILIATE Highlight**

VOTF Holy Trinity Church, Washington, DC

Ministry Day at Holy Trinity was a great success for all who provided information as well as all attendees.

VOTF had a great poster display, lent to Bob from the national office (affiliates can borrow this display set up by contacting John Moynihan at the national office at 617-558-5252) along with a very large supply of handout materials. Included were material for the Accountability Campaign (including the petition), VOTF in the Survey of American Catholics, and the VOTF national brochure,.

There was a community-building spirit, with people chatting around the posters during the coffee hours after each Mass. One learned a lot about other ministries, and truth be told, most of the people wandering around looking are among the most active people at Trinity. It was good for VOTF to be included on the flyer announcing Ministry Day, and in the individual posters prepared for each ministry by the Parish Council. We were given a table in a prime location in the path to the coffee and donuts, We were able to see get extra VOTF materials placed in the back of the church, for people to take the following Sunday.

One person interested in VOTF asked "What do you actually do?" and signed up. She's a sister of St. Francis and ran the Mt. Carmel Women's Shelter at old St. Mary's downtown. She works now in the Jesuit House on 36th St. and will come to our next meeting because she, too, wants more accountability in the Church.

A women, who teaches Ignatian Spirituality in the parish, came over at the end of the day and signed up. She took a flyer to post in the Parish Center. She won't come to monthly meetings but wants to be on our distribution list. We are hopeful that such efforts will lead others to get involved with VOTF.

It was a very rich two days of information and sharing on Church reforms and lay ministries. Katie said: "A very Catholic weekend!" A lot of Good News shared and a warm up for our Fall Kickoff.\*

\*The Fall Kickoff refers to Fr. Tom Reese's scheduled visit to VOTF on Sept. 30. His address is titled, "A Survival Guide for Thinking Catholics."

## COMMENTARY

*Frank McConville of VOTF Boston, MA shared the following idea that is a fairly user-friendly way to approach the beginning of financial accountability on the parish level.*

### **Protecting Parish Finances**

This is a major issue upon which VOTF and the Financial Accountability Committee have been working for some time. This model has been mandated at the parish level throughout the Hartford, CT diocese; it is the use of Tamper-Evident Sunday Collection Bags. I witnessed this practice at my son's parish, St. Margaret's, in Madison, CT and followed up with the pastor and business manager for more information.

Within the Archdiocese of Boston and most other dioceses, there is no systematic control of the financial offerings and receipts from the parishioners. Typically, Mass collections/offerings are taken up by the ushers in baskets and dumped into a larger basket and placed in a closet in the back of the church or carried forward and placed on the altar. What happens afterward is uncontrolled. Presumably the receipts are placed in a rectory safe and subsequently counted by designated "counters" and deposited in a bank.

For tax purposes, a committee of trusted senior parishioners count the receipts; envelopes, checks, and cash are recorded for tax accounting at the end of the year. Under the best of circumstances, there is no accountability based on the timing of each Mass or 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Collections or Special Collections. The cash is "open" to whomever handles it until it is deposited in the bank; parishioners, church workers and clergy.

The proposed Cash Control Accountability System uses disposable, tamper-evident bags. Each bag, with a unique identifying number, is pre-labeled by Mass time and 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and Special Collections. The collection is placed in the bag with a minimum of two parishioners as witnesses. After each collection, the bag is tamper-evident sealed, later placed in the rectory safe and opened by the parish counting committee early in the week. It is counted and recorded by Mass, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> collections, etc., by parishioners and then deposited in the bank.

The benefit is a tightly controlled, cash management system, avoiding the temptation to steal or misreport; it is transparent as the process is evident to the parishioners at the Masses. Minimally, this builds financial institutional trust and confidence. It is not cost

prohibitive at about 35 cents a bag. One supplier\* is A. Rifkin Co., 1400 San Souci Parkway, PO Box 878, Wilkes-Barre PA 18703-0878 or call 1-800-458-7300.

\* VOTF does not endorse any particular supplier. We welcome, however, information about suppliers in the interest of sharing several options with our readers.

### **An Invitation: Explore the Roots of our Faith**

*Fr. Walter Cuenin*

I had the privilege of studying for the priesthood at the North American College for four years and was ordained at St. Peter's Basilica. After three years working in a parish I then returned to Rome to pursue a doctorate in sacred theology at the Gregorian University. Living in Rome totally transformed my life.

My Roman sojourn taught me so much about our faith. Not only did I have the opportunity to see the ancient sites, both from classical and Christian Rome, I also had the time to walk the narrow ways and pray at some of the oldest shrines of Christianity. I studied with students from all over the globe and had many opportunities to explore the Vatican. This experience gave me a deep love of the Church, which I have preserved even in these challenging times. Over the years I have accompanied many people on pilgrimages to Rome and have seen first hand how they have been transformed by their experience of the Eternal City.

This coming June I am looking forward to joining Steve Krueger, a Catholic who is committed to Church renewal, was founding executive director of Voice of the Faithful, in leading this pilgrimage to Rome called "Exploring the Roots of our Faith." This will be a unique opportunity to be with other Catholics who seriously seek a renewal of our Church. Spending time in *community* exploring Rome will be a special way to appreciate our faith heritage and at the same time be strengthened in our commitment to the Church.

If we are serious about trying to build a Church that truly values the gifts and talents of the laity, it is essential that we know its history and traditions. Sharing a pilgrimage to the city where the great Apostles Peter and Paul gave their life for the faith enables Christians to deepen their commitment to the foundations of our Church community. From that base we can begin to appreciate the modern Church with all of its strengths and weaknesses.

Steve Krueger and I would love to share this pilgrimage with you. If you are interested, please visit [www.travelillum.com/trc/crf](http://www.travelillum.com/trc/crf) where you will find a description of the pilgrimage and registration information.

### **Massachusetts SOL Reform: This hasn't passed yet?**

*A report from Steve Krueger, VOTF Boston, MA*

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead*

In March of this year I contacted the editor of a major newspaper in Massachusetts to discuss legislation that the Coalition to Reform Sex Abuse Laws in Massachusetts (CTRSAL), [www.stopsexcrime.org](http://www.stopsexcrime.org), was supporting to repeal the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution and for civil actions for cases of childhood sexual abuse. We hoped that he would support this legislation and that he would editorialize in favor of it as part of a campaign at the time Judiciary hearings were being held. To my astonishment he said to me, “What ... this hasn’t passed yet?” This was a prophetic refrain that has echoed now for months, if not years, in the public square, a refrain that helped keep advocates for this legislation to press on, even when this legislation was by all accounts, “dead”.

Yet, it is expected that by the time you receive *In the Vineyard*, or within the next week, Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts will sign into law House Bill H5234, legislation that extends the statute of limitations (SOL) for criminal prosecution of crimes of rape and some crimes of sexual assault of children from 15 to 27 years; in cases where there is corroborating evidence, H5234 eliminates the SOL and tightens laws regarding the Massachusetts sexual offender registry.

The passage of this legislation was spearheaded by the Coalition to Reform Sex Abuse Laws in Massachusetts under the leadership of Bonnie Gorman and Susan Renehan. VOTF is a member of the Coalition and it had the support of many VOTF members as well as the VOTF national office, along with victims and survivors and advocates from all walks of life. While this legislation does not go far enough towards creating a zero-tolerance environment it is a “legislative victory” and is significant because it can be built upon not only in Massachusetts but also nationally.

There were several lessons learned from this shared victory. While most of us are actively involved in our parishes, most of us have not been actively involved in passing legislation. Yet we find ourselves in the position of advocates for victims and survivors; we know that working on this issue is consistent with the rich tradition of Catholic social justice teaching in the public sphere.

In the past four years, CTRSAL had sponsored legislation that had died in “study committee.” The testimony at the hearings in March 2006 was overwhelmingly in favor of the legislation as written –repeal of both the criminal and civil SOL. It appeared that the legislation would be released to the full legislature where we had received written support from a majority of legislators in both the House and Senate. Passage of the bills seemed within reach.

However, by the middle of May it became apparent that the legislation lacked the support of key legislative leaders. As we regrouped one Saturday in mid-May we pondered what we could do before the legislative session ended on June 30<sup>th</sup>. How many more times

could we ask our supporters to come to another rally or send another email or letter to their legislator? How many more times would the media continue to cover our activities?

Facing defeat at that point, we cautiously decided to redouble our efforts and take a “campaign approach,” an approach that would require us to raise over \$25,000 in a few weeks. If we were going to fail, we were going to “fail forward.” We developed a three-pronged campaign strategy that included grassroots activism, a public relations campaign, and, to establish a professional presence “inside the building,” hiring a lobbyist.

On June 30<sup>th</sup> a bill was released by the Judiciary Committee that would extend the SOL by 12 years in cases of criminal prosecution. The Massachusetts Catholic Conference, changing its position, and now came out in favor of the legislation. It did so only because the repeal of the SOL for civil actions had been taken out of the bill. Over the summer months, the bill was further amended and strengthened, and will become law this week. One of our most ardent supporters and an expert on Massachusetts politics, Tom O’Neill, told us that we had “moved a mountain.”

While the passage of legislation that eliminates the SOL for crimes of sexual abuse of children will be significantly affected by factors unique to each state, what follows are some lessons that I believe can be generally applied to the activities for these efforts in all states.

*Lesson 1: **Keep the focus on the broader issue.***

The American Medical Association has called the sexual abuse of children the “violent, silent epidemic,” and a recent study by the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention has concluded that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused – in some way – by the time they are 18 years of age. In the final months, the campaign focused on this statistic by applying it to the Massachusetts population, which conservatively yields the astounding number of approximately 50 children per day.

Working within the Coalition provided VOTF members the opportunity to work for the broader issue of zero tolerance in our society and not just in the Catholic Church. Politically this was important in Massachusetts so that the legislation was not perceived as being “against” the Catholic Church.

*Lesson 2: **Build, or join, a Coalition.***

CTRSAL put itself in a position to win by forming a broad-based, state-wide coalition. A base of support naturally exists in public and private child care social service agencies. Leveraging this, the Coalition was able to identify constituent advocates in every legislative district in the state. These members spearheaded at least one meeting with each and every legislator and also identified media contacts. Additionally, the Coalition was able to galvanize key support from such groups as the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association who helped the cause by contacting legislators, at our request, in support of the legislation in the final days of the legislative session.

Additionally, the Coalition implemented an online lobbying tool that allowed supporters to send an instant email to their legislator through the Coalitions' web site. This also helped build an email list of supporters throughout the state.

***Lesson 3: Educate, educate, educate – yourself, your legislators and the media.***

The issues involved are complex and each of us can make a difference by talking to others about this issue so we might be informed. The Coalition had engaged a broad range of experts and victims and survivors to establish a base of expertise on the issues.

The legislative process is complex and can be treacherous, if not inaccessible to the uninformed. It is important to base our efforts on the fundamentals of political activism. For the final campaign, we sought advice from several seasoned political consultants, as well as supportive legislators, all of whom made a contribution in developing our strategy for the final month.

Over a four-year period there were hundreds of meetings with legislators to educate them on the issues and win their support. Members of the Coalition met with every legislator. This was the essential groundwork that put us in a position to win.

When something happens that is newsworthy, the media is writing under deadline. For us to have our side of the story in the media we need to be educating them beforehand by developing those relationships and keeping them abreast of the issues, even when there is not any news. In the final weeks of the campaign we had to redouble our efforts to combat misinformation put out by our opponents.

Misinformation is one of the primary tactics employed by an opponent on issues in the court of public opinion. Because truth is our strongest ally against misinformation, education is essential to our success. “Why hasn't this passed yet?” There is no legitimate answer to that question.

***Lesson 4: Conduct campaigns – both in the public square and inside your State House.***

In strategizing our actions for the final month we adopted a multi-track strategy. To make the impact we needed we recognized that we would have to raise money for a public relations campaign and hire a lobbyist. All of this was predicated on the fact that we knew we had broad-based public and legislative support and we needed to create an environment where legislative leadership would be in a position to release the bills for a democratic vote by the legislature.

The lobbyist gave us an ongoing presence inside the State House and was invaluable for providing intelligence, helping define the parameters of our actions, and on keeping the issue in the minds of legislators during the frenetic end of a legislative session.

The public relations campaign sought to increase public awareness one more time in a manner that demonstrated our strength. This culminated in a radio ad campaign, which you can hear at <http://www.stopsexcrime.org/radioads.htm>. On at least three occasions

when we contacted a journalist they told us they had heard the ads. More important, legislators began to view us through a different lens after we retained one of the top lobbying firms in the Commonwealth. Together these efforts along with grassroots actions had the effect of giving our voice more gravitas both in the State House and in the public square. Ultimately we believe it was pivotal to the success we had.

*Lesson 5: **Stay the course – keep advocating.***

Just as our own work in reforming the Church calls us to take the long view for bringing about the transformative change we seek, the somber conclusion is that we will need to take the same view to bring about a “zero-tolerance” policy for the sexual abuse of children across the country.

Here in Massachusetts our work is not done. As so many of you know, it is the repeal of the civil statute of limitations that will have the greatest impact in protecting children, providing justice for victims and survivors, and creating institutional accountability.

In the past four years we have had our eyes opened to the governance structures in the Church with great dismay. At the same time we are now having our eyes opened to the legislative process of our state governments and it is proving to be at least sobering for the uninitiated. As a goal of the Campaign for Accountability we must be seeking to learn from one another and accept the realities of becoming political activists as well as Church reformers. While this is a role that few of us may have envisioned as VOTF was emerging, we can take consolation in knowing that we are carrying on the rich tradition of Catholic social justice teaching and making the world a safer place for children and greater justice for victims and survivors.

Congratulations to all those who worked so hard, for so long on this and other legislation and throughout the country. You are making a difference!

[Steve can be reached at [sak\\_votf@hotmail.com](mailto:sak_votf@hotmail.com) for more information on the passing of H5234.]