

In the Vineyard

September 23

National News

News from the Priest Support Working Group

In a letter to Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) urged the bishops in the United States to request a "serious ecclesial review of mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests." The request stems from a two-year project developed by VOTF's Priest Support Working Group. The project examines the current state of the priesthood and how the problems faced by priest's impact the laity.

John Ryan, chair of the Priest Support group, said the letter went to Cardinal O'Malley as the chair of the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The Working Group then sent copies of the letter to the entire committee and to all the U.S. diocesan heads, and then followed up with electronic copies to more than 300 leaders of Catholic organizations and media. "Although other groups, lay and clerical, have made such requests in the past, we believe ours is the first to spell out a more comprehensive rationale for such a review," John said.

You can read **the letter** at this site and read the **press release** here.

Women in the Church

The Implementation Team for the recently passed **NRC Resolution** calling for Church-wide Re-examination and Reform of the Role of Women in the Church is working on an implementation document to present to the National Representative Council for their semi-annual meeting in October 2008 in Dayton OH. -- *Submitted by P. L. Thorp.*

A Prayer Request from the Prayerful Voice Working Group

Whenever you see a school bus pray for the complete safety of the children (and all others) inside.

Strategy Survey Update

More than 500 members responded to our recent call for input on a strategy and planning survey. We are grateful to each and every one of you. Now begins the huge task of correlating all those responses! We will report the results to you within a few weeks – and then complete the further task of comparing them with the survey responses we previously received from the Officers, the Board, the National Representative Council, and affiliate leaders.

Affiliate News

Hartford VOTF Demands Resignation of Cardinal George

At its August meeting, the Hartford Regional Voice of the Faithful Affiliate voted to reiterate the position it took in 2006, when it called for Cardinal Francis George to resign from his position as the archbishop of Chicago. According to Joanne Moran, an active member of the Hartford VOTF, “Cardinal George failed to live up to the mandates of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (a document he helped write) by failing to remove Rev. Daniel McCormack from ministry. After recent court testimony was made public, the members felt that it was absolutely necessary to again ask that Cardinal George remove himself from leadership in Chicago.” Last week, the Hartford Regional Voice of the Faithful sent a **letter to Archbishop Sambini** asking for Cardinal George’s resignation.

Site Seeing

Politics and the Church

Archbishop John C. Favalora, Archbishop of Miami, recent released a statement on why Catholic priests should not take sides on political candidates. Apparently, a group called the Alliance Defense Fund, a conservative Christian group, is urging Catholic priests to advocate for particular candidates “in light of the truth of the Scripture.”

Here is Favalora’s response:

<http://www.miamiarchdiocese.org/Statement.asp?op=Column080912&lg=E>

Changes at the National Catholic Reporter

Joe Feuerherd has been appointed *NCR* publisher and editor in chief.

Read more at <http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1917>

Reflections on Lourdes

The following is an excerpt from “An Immense Maternal Presence,” an article by Tina Beattie in the September 13 issue of *The Tablet* (UK) that includes a metaphor for the relationship between the institution and the faith.

“According to Bernadette, the apparition asked for a church to be built, and today a vast basilica rises above the shrine, visible testimony to the wealth and power of the institutional Church. Yet the spiritual life of Lourdes is focused on the grotto and its surroundings beneath the basilica, and this topography acts as a metaphor for the relationship between the religious institution and the powerful undercurrent of faith that it can never fully control. The rocks around the grotto have been worn smooth by the touch of millions of hands, and there is a sense of something visceral, pagan even, about the way in which Catholic devotions and prayers melt and mingle with the ... mystery of a God both veiled and revealed in earth, wind and fire, in rocky wildernesses and the

untamable persistence of nature in the face of all our civilising and controlling impulses. Surely, an incarnational faith is one which situates itself in such a space of encounter between the sublime and the ridiculous - between the inscrutable majesty of God, and the often foolish muddle of our human devotions.”

You can read the entire article here: <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/articles/11976>

Calendar

September 25

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, will be speaking at the Paulist Center, 5 Park Street, Boston, at 7:00 pm, September 25. She will be speaking on her new book, *Quest for the Living God*. Johnson is Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University. Her writings include *She Who Is* and *Friends of God and Prophets*.

September 28

Immaculate Conception, 5 Court St., Newburyport: The Rev. Bruce Morrill speaks at the Faith Formation series of the Voice of the Faithful Northshore Seacoast affiliate Sept. 28, 7 p.m. Morrill is professor at Boston College and author of books dealing with Catholic liturgy and sacraments.

October 26

VOTF Northern California continues its “Signs of the Times” lecture series with a presentation on Sunday October 26, 2008 by Thomas Sheehan from the Religious Studies Department at Stanford University titled “Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus”.

For further information contact John van Hagan; jvhphd@sbcglobal.net

Book Corner

Looking for something to read? The VOTF National Office has copies of Jim Muller’s book *Keep the Faith, Change the Church*, and you can order copies of the book *Voices of the Faithful, Loyal Catholics Striving for Change* by William D’Antonio and Anthony Pogorelc from the VOTF website. Go to www.votf.org and follow the links.

Book Review

Before Dallas by Nicholas P. Cafardi, 2008 Paulist Press

Review submitted by Anne Southwood

This book is as user friendly as possible, given the scenario of American bishop response to sexual abuse of children. It helps us wade through shoulda, woulda, coulda feelings. The author provides a timeline of related law and actions....

Click here to read the rest of Anne’s review

Questions, Comments?

Please e-mail vineyard@votf.org

Siobhan Carroll

Vineyard Editor

Letter from Hartford VOTF to the Apostolic Nuncio

September 18, 2008

Most Reverend Pietro Sambì
Apostolic Nuncio to the United States
3339 Massachusetts Avenue
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Archbishop Sambì,

We are writing on behalf of the membership of the Hartford (CT.) Regional Affiliate of Voice of the Faithful which adopted the following resolution on April 6, 2006:

As an affiliate of national Voice of the Faithful, we support and uphold the following resolution passed by the VOTF Representative Council on 9/18/04:

“The Voice of the Faithful hereby resolves that no bishop or other hierarch who, knowing of the sexual abuse of minors by any priest, has failed to remove the priest from any exposure to minors or to take any other effective steps to protect the people of God, or has concealed the risk of abuse presented by such priests from the people to whom such priest was assigned to minister, should be permitted to hold any position of ecclesiastical leadership in the church.”

To that end, the Greater West Hartford (CT.) VOTF calls for the resignation of Cardinal Francis George.

After hearing about the testimony that Cardinal George gave in a recent court proceeding, we are impelled to reiterate our position and make you aware of how seriously the lay members of our Catholic Church take this matter.

We took our original action with regret and sorrow, but with the view that Cardinal George brought this upon himself. As one of the authors of the Charter for the Protection of Children, drafted for the USCCB and adopted by that organization, he should have been aware of its “zero tolerance” provision that any priest credibly accused of sexually abusing a child should be removed from ministry immediately. As the creator of the archdiocesan review commission, he should have followed the advice that the commission gave him to remove Fr. McCormack.

We have heard Cardinal George’s apologies and his acceptance of responsibility for this tragic situation. We have heard of the various plans he has enacted to make sure such things never happen again. We have heard how humiliated he feels to be in this situation. We have heard, in essence, his “mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa”. But there is something missing – the actions that reflect his words of contrition.

In order to restore trust to the position of Bishop in the Catholic Church, in order to restore trust in the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and their Dallas Charter, in order to restore the trust of Catholics within the Archdiocese of Chicago, and in order to acknowledge the gravity of his lack of action, we strongly urge Cardinal George to resign from his position as Archbishop of Chicago and agree to no longer hold a position of authority within the Catholic Church.

If the Cardinal refuses to step down, then we call upon you to request his resignation. This is what the American Catholic Bishops demand of a priest who is credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. We believe that this is what Cardinal George needs to do to demonstrate his acceptance of his personal responsibility in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jayne O'Donnell

Dave Blume

Doris Bourque

Bill Carroll

Mary Espinosa

Fay Lenz

Rick Lenz

Joanne Moran

cc: Archbishop Henry Mansell, Archbishop of Hartford
Bishop Peter Rosazza, Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford
Bishop Christie Macaluso, Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford

Tracking the American Bishops' Response to the Sex Abuse Crisis

Before Dallas by Nicholas P. Cafardi, 2008 Paulist Press

Book review by Anne Southwood

Cafardi first delineates Church canon law specific to abuse. He then explains flawed bishop response in light of attachment to protocol and crooked paths available under Church law. A civil lawyer as well as canonist, Cafardi finishes with lessons to be learned from the abuse debacle. Very qualified, he is Duquesne Dean Emeritus and law professor.

Cafardi makes us aware of a history of sexual abuse of children, proven by Church norms relating to it. He gives a concise history of citations from the New Testament through Church Councils and collections like the Burchard and Gratian's Decretum to the modern 1917 and 1983 Code of Canon Law. Church norms eventually include the penalty of removal of orders from clerics.

Why did this not happen in response to the American clerical abuse crisis? Parents had a clear vision of a straight path. Myopic American bishops did not. Wasting a decade hoping for help from Rome, bishops seized on therapy centers as a solution to what the public knew was a horror by the early 90's. "Treated" priests kept rolling down off that therapy highroad. In 2002 the Boston Globe continually thrust the scarlet letter A at readers. Child sexual abuse by priests was now an avalanche breaking secret file boxes open. Furor forced the American Bishops Conference to put a public face on a horrendous fact in Dallas. The "pastoral" approach centered on offending priests was insufficient. The National Review Board was created. The John Jay Study was commissioned. Cafardi offers a disturbing quote from a bishop in the Report of the National Review Board: there was "a disconnect whereby for some reason at a pastoral level bishops and priests did not grasp how horrified the average parent would be over the thought that his or her child would be sexually abused by a member of the clergy."

Under Canon Law, bishops must begin a penal process on a "believable" charge of abuse. Canonist Cafardi looks at the reasons why the bishops had not defended the rights of our children, whose rights equal those of accused priests. He is fair and thorough; 150 pages of text are supported by 100 pages of notes. Some of the reasons: the penal process was not adequate to the problem and was not "favored" over other forms of correction in Church law. The process was time consuming and a penalty could not be applied during an appeal. Also, untrained American canon lawyers at that time had to operate within a 5 year statute of limitations. Ultimately, blame and penalty could not be applied to any priest committing a canonical crime if his reason was impaired. Bishops feared loss on appeal.

The author points out two of the roads not taken by bishops as missed opportunities. One is the failure to use regional canonical trials. In his opinion, public knowledge might have prevented further crimes. If lawyers advised against the use, fear of openness to civil "discoverability" was the motivation. Another avenue might have been to insist the Holy See, now the CDF, assume responsibility it claimed for all crimes relating to sexual abuse of children. A Canon Law Statute of Limitations does not apply to crimes under the purview of the CDF. The American lawyer Levada now occupies the CDF chair formerly occupied by Cardinal Ratzinger. Cafardi insists on the crisis teaching us two important lessons. One is the negative legal value of secrecy. The other is that bishops must do their duty in balancing protection of rights under Church law. We now have an American in the CDF chair. Woulda, coulda? Shoulda!