

In the Vineyard

September 7, 2006

“When every bishop in every diocese cooperates in bringing about a genuinely just resolution of every charge of sexual abuse, I believe we will once more be perceived as credible moral teachers. Thus, what is good for the victims will likewise be good for the Church.” Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

VOTF – Voice of the Faithful; USCCB – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; NRB – National Review Board (appointed by the USCCB); FADICA – Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities; NRC – National Representative Council (elected by VOTF members in 14 US regions).

In this issue:

VOTF National News Update: Meet our newly expanded Board of Trustees; and NRC has newly elected representatives in Region 7 (IL, IN, WI) and 4 (DC, DE, MD, VA).

Also, note:

- Our **Campaign for Accountability Fall** Action plans are coming together with a menu of choices for affiliates that includes gathering signatures for our upcoming accountability petition; conducting a forum with local politicians about the reform of sexual abuse laws in collaboration with other child advocacy groups; holding a state-of-the-diocese meeting with a report card rating the bishop’s progress a; and a rosary invitation with meditations that focus on survivors. The petition and rosary meditation will soon be available on the national web site. We also encourage you to get more involved with these campaign action plans by contacting your local affiliate.
- VOTF president Mary Pat Fox will join a panel including Frank Butler of FADICA, Russell Shaw from Opus Dei and others at Catholic University, Washington, DC during a two-day conference “The Catholic Church in America” Sept. 20-21. For details, go to http://publicaffairs.cua.edu/news/07CatholicChurchInAmerica_LCI_Conference_Main.htm. Religious News Service also noted the conference at <http://www.religionnews.com/press02/PR090106A.html>.

Diocese/State Watch: Documents that were “lost” are now “found” in **Burlington, VT** abuse case; another loss for **Bridgeport, CT** as a much-loved priest leaves the priesthood after helping to uncover the truth behind an embezzling pastor in Darien, CT; VOTF Long Island has sent a letter to all the priests in their **Rockville Center, NY diocese** – advancing their case for a *representative* finance council. The affiliate’s petition for such a council has 7000 signatures; **Santa Rosa, CA** Bishop Daniel Walsh may be facing criminal charges in the handling of an admitted abuser priest who fled the state during a delay by the archdiocese in reporting him to civil authorities; the **Milwaukee, WI** archdiocese has agreed to settle sexual abuse claims that involved 10 victims in California and a priest the archdiocese had transferred there; in **San Diego, CA**, attorneys for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego have asked a judge to order those claiming sexual abuse by clergy to reveal their identities in public court documents;

VOTF Affiliate highlight: VOTF affiliates have found countless ways over the past nearly five years to support our priests – VOTF Winona, MN has added another. The affiliate organized a gathering of all present and past parish pastors; and two more priests, one in Florida and the other in Massachusetts, receive deserved appreciation from parishioners and friends. See “Acknowledging Our Pastors”; please let us know about your own pastor’s good work. Write to pthorp.ed@votf.org.

Survivor Community News: Sue Archibald, for four years the director of the Healing Alliance, announced “The time has come for me to pass the torch to a new leader.” Go to <http://www.healingall.org/> for Sue’s farewell letter and meet the new executive director Jonia Mariechild.

The need for Statutes of Limitations reforms on the sexual abuse of children is glaring, again, this time in Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Channel News reported: “A state appeals court ruling on Tuesday said that four alleged victims of decades-old sexual abuse by Milwaukee priests can’t sue the archdiocese because the statute of limitations has expired.” Go to <http://www.themilwaukeechannel.com/news/9756198/detail.html>. But the archdiocese settled other cases with abuse victims in California. See Diocese/State Watch for more.

Book Review: Anne Southwood (VOTF Boston, MA) reviews *Seeking Wholeness: Women Dealing with Abuse of Power in the Catholic Church* by Marie Evans Bouclin, Liturgical Press, Order of Saint Benedict; Collegeville, MN, 2006.

See SITE-Seeing, Etc. and “Something to think about” for more.

Something to think about: The Los Angeles, CA diocesan publication *The Tidings* recently published an article from *Crisis* magazine written by Denver, Colorado’s diocesan chancellor Francis X. Maier, “Shakedown: Ripped off in the name of justice”. NRC member Frank Douglas, VOTF AZ, rebuts Maier’s argument in graphic terms; see Commentary – “Clearing the Smoke: Church Officials vs. Victims”.

Something *else* to think about: Catholic News Service reports that US bishops “adopted the fifth edition of a [new priestly formation program] by a nearly unanimous vote, 231-3, at their June 2005 meeting in Chicago.” Go to http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=21058. The text of the new program is available at <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/>. Click on “Program for Priestly Formation”. Several correspondents have asked when the bishops, in light of their handling of clergy sexual abuse of children inclusive of recent events in Chicago, IL and Santa Rosa, CA, will issue guidelines for their *own* formation. What do *you* think? Let us know at pthorp.ed@votf.org.

[Note to readers of *In the Vineyard*, Aug. 27 issue: Some readers were not able to find Daniel Maguire’s essay “The Church IS a Democracy” on the home page of www.religiousconsultation.org. The particular link is http://religiousconsultation.org/Church_IS_a_Democracy.htm. We apologize for any inconvenience.]

SITE-Seeing, Etc.

BishopAccountability.org not only has a new web site and arguably the most extensive documentation of the Roman Catholic Church abuse crisis worldwide, and their weekly newsletter the *Monitor* is brief, current and free. Of particular note for *Vineyard* readers at this time is comprehensive coverage of the **Santa Rosa, CA** case involving Fr. Xavier Ochoa (see more in Diocese/State Watch). A subscription to the *Monitor* is only a click away – just visit the new home page at www.bishop-accountability.org and click on “Subscribe to our *Monitor* e-newsletter”.

Frank Douglas (VOTF AZ) notes that **financial vulnerabilities on the parish level** are well considered by Michael Ryan at www.ChurchSecurity.info. “Michael W. Ryan is a retired federal law enforcement official experienced in the conduct of financial audits and security investigations. Following his retirement, Ryan became interested in church security and developed comprehensive procedures which, when properly implemented and monitored, virtually guarantee that every dollar placed in the collection basket or plate on Saturday evening or Sunday morning is, in fact, deposited in the parish bank account. Those procedures and more can be downloaded free of charge at his website, www.ChurchSecurity.info.”

It’s not too late to sign up for **Boston College’s** online course opportunities such as “Women Envisioning Church” at http://www.bc.edu/sites/c21online/women_church.html.

Commonweal magazine will host a special event in Chicago, IL on Thurs. Oct. 12. **Andrew Greeley** will speak on “Loyal In Spite of It All: The Laity and the Future of the Church” followed by a Q&A session with Paul Baumann, editor of *Commonweal*. For details, go to https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/article.php?id_article=1697. The current issue of *Commonweal* features a subject of interest among many Catholics, “Young Catholics & Their Faith – Is Being Spiritual Enough?”.

The August 24 article on the Tom Roeser blog at <http://tomroeser.com/sectionlist.asp?s=&month=8&year=2006> “Anne Burke outmaneuvers bishops” is worth reading, as is the Aug. 31 entry on Burke. These were part of a series produced for *The Wanderer*, a national Catholic newspaper in the United States. Burke, the former interim chair of the USCCB National Review Board, was the inaugural recipient of the VOTF Catherine of Siena Lay Person Award presented at the 2005 VOTF Convocation in Indianapolis.

Want a sense of VOTF’s global community? It only takes a minute to visit VOTF Australia at www.votfaustralia.org.

Commentary

“Clearing Some Smoke: Church Officials vs. Victims” Frank Douglas, VOTF Tucson, AZ

QUOTE for our time. The following prayer has been attributed to Mother Teresa (but is also associated with St. Therese of Lisieux). It has been making the rounds among parents of school children as families ready themselves for a new academic year.

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.

VOTF NATIONAL News Update

NATIONAL Representative Council Update:

In Region 7 (IL, IN, WI) Frank Murray has been elected to replace Mary Heins and in Region 4 (DC, DE, MD, VA) Chuck Miller has been elected to replace Evelyn Mercantini. There are pending elections in 8 (MN, ND, SD) and 10 (AR, OK, TS).

Board of Trustees Update:

As reported in the August 27 *Vineyard*: The nominating committee appointed by the **VOTF Board of Trustees** has selected John Hushon (DC), Bill Casey (VA), David O'Brien (MA), and Elia Marnik (MA) to serve three-year terms on the Board of Trustees, beginning September 2006. The National Representative Council, which elected two representatives from the Council to the Board of Trustees (Dan Bartley and Ron DuBois), approved the selection by the nominating committee.

The current Board of Trustees, their designations and terms:

Dan Bartley, NRC, NY, 2 yrs.

David Castaldi, Chair, MA 1 yr.

William Casey, MD, 3 yrs.

Ron DuBois, NRC, MA, 2 yrs.

Mary Pat Fox (president VOTF, NY, 2 yrs. (automatically extended if re-elected)

Svea Fraser, MA, 1 yr.

John Hushon, DC, 3 yrs.

Elia Marnik, MA, 3 yrs.

David O'Brien, MA, 3 yrs.

Maura O'Brien, MA, 1 yr.

James Post, past VOTF president, MA; 2 yrs., (automatically extended if current president is re-elected)

DIOCESE/State Watch

Affiliate Highlight from Winona, MN: The *Winona Daily News* reported: “Marian Hall at St. Mary’s Church was packed for the church’s first ever Homecoming celebration. The Homecoming was organized by the Winona Voice of the Faithful as a way to show its support for priests. It also celebrated the church’s history and the people who have been part of it.” For the full story, go to <http://www.winonadailynews.com/articles/2006/08/28/news/00lead.txt>.

Milwaukee, WI: The *Pioneer Press* reported: “In California, people who claim they were abused by former Milwaukee-area priest Siegfried Widera can sue the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for transferring him there in 1981 knowing he had a history of abuse. Widera's accusers in Wisconsin cannot sue, a state appeals court ruled Tuesday, even though they have documents showing the archdiocese quietly transferred him from one parish to another after a 1973 conviction on sexual perversion with a teenager. It was after Widera's transfer to a church in Delavan when the abuse allegedly took place.” See <http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/news/local/15392473.htm>.

USAToday.com reported: “The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has agreed to pay more than \$16 million to settle sexual abuse claims involving 10 victims in California and two priests, one transferred there by the archdiocese, church officials said Friday.” Go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-09-01-milwaukee-settles_x.htm.

Burlington, VT: The lost have been found, as reported by WCAX-TV News in Vermont: “More than 26 years worth of records relating to a Roman Catholic priest accused in a sex abuse case, which Diocese of Burlington officials had said don't exist, have turned up. The files, from the years 1971 to 1997, deal with the Rev. George Paulin, a priest who allegedly molested a Newport altar boy in the 1970s. The victim is suing the Diocese in one of 23 pending sex-abuse lawsuits.” Go to <http://www.speroforum.com/site/article.asp?idCategory=33&idsub=134&id=5242&t=%27Catholic+Church+in+America%27+seminar+announced>.

Bridgeport, CT: While the end of a long, painful ordeal is coming to a close for the priest who stood up for transparency and truth, the Bridgeport diocese has the same problems that enabled a pastor to embezzle a small fortune during his tenure. VOTF Bridgeport published a statement on their [website](#). The *Hartford Courant* reported on this story; go to <http://www.courant.com/news/local/hc-sa-priest2aug30,0,7465410.story?coll=hc-headlines-local> and the *Darien Times* conducted an interview with Fr. Madden, the “whistle blower” priest who has now left the parish and the priesthood. Go to http://www.acorn-online.com/news/publish/article_8901.shtml.

California:

Santa Rosa, CA: Bishop Daniel Walsh and other officials in the Santa Rosa, CA diocese may face criminal charges over their failure to report admitted child sexual abuser Fr. Ochoa in a timely manner. Fr. Ochoa fled the state. See

<http://www1.pressdemocrat.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060825/NEWS/60825001/1033/NEWS01>. Also see the VOTF North Bay, CA letter to Bishop Walsh at http://www.votf-sf.org/html/northern_california.html.

For excellent coverage, including a case review and suggestions for you to help, as a “10-minute activist,” go to http://www.bishop-accountability.org/tma/2006_08_28_CA_Santa_Rosa_Walsh/#case.

San Diego, CA: The *Press Enterprise* reports: “Attorneys for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego have asked a judge to order those claiming sexual abuse by clergy to reveal their identities in public court documents so that church leaders can adequately defend themselves in the first lawsuits headed for trial early next year.” Read more at http://www.pe.com/localnews/inland/stories/PE_News_Local_D_churchsuit23.389bc51.html.

Long Island, NY (Rockville Center diocese): VOTF Long Island has amassed 7000 signatures on a petition for financial accountability and the establishment of a representative diocesan finance council in the Rockville Center diocese. The petition will be presented at a vigil to be held at the chancery offices of Bishop Murphy on Sept. 12. Click on the elephant (that’s right!) at <http://www.votf-li.org/> for details.

- The VOTF LI affiliate also sent a letter to every priest in the diocese regarding the management of excess cash reserves in the diocese and the need for the above-noted council.

Acknowledging our pastors:

VOTF SW Florida: Fr. Thomas J. Glackin of St. John the Evangelist Church in Naples, FL was the recipient of an award from the University of Notre Dame Alumni Association. He was named an Honorary Alumnus in a citation that noted his work with VOTF. Read the excerpted text of the citation in Diocese/State Watch An excerpt from the citation text follows (with thanks to Peg Clark of VOTF SW Florida for sharing the news):

His parishioners, now as founding pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Naples, speak lovingly and publicly of his warmth, his humor, his ecumenism, his tolerance and love for all humans. Never failing to mention his affection for Notre Dame (win or lose) in his homilies, he reaches out through his ministry to welcome all seekers to the Kingdom of God. Whether commemorating Kristallnacht with our Jewish brothers and sisters, praying for the victims of sexual abuse by priests with Voice of the Faithful, seeking God’s blessing on hurricane survivors or comforting the loved ones of our deceased, he is what his parishioners describe: a man with compassion, admired by everyone, a role model for every Catholic, every priest, every pastor. May our lady, Notre Dame, bless you and your work.

Also: A sign outside a **Canton, MA** church reads: “No matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter where you’re from, no matter where you’re going, no matter how

good or how bad things may seem, please know that you are always welcome at St. Gerard Majella Parish." Read the story of the priest behind the message, Fr. Bernard McLaughlin, at

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/09/03/the_gospel_of_father_mac/.

COMMENTARY

Clearing Some Smoke: Church Officials vs. Survivors

*
Frank Douglas, NRC Region 13, VOTF AZ*

Perhaps a better title for Mr. Maier's article (published in the Los Angeles diocesan publication *The Tidings*) would have been "Propaganda: How the Bishops Continue to Blow Smoke." Mr. Maier, the Denver, Colorado archdiocesan chancellor, recently wrote the third article in a series of three entitled "Shakedown: Ripped off in the name of justice." I have responded below to particular points made in the article. The article was published originally in *Crisis* magazine at

http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/social_justice/sj00198.htm

[Excerpted text from the Maier article appear in quotes. Frank's comments are in italics.]

"Whatever the merit of these claims of clergy sexual abuse against a minor, the plaintiff's attorneys' goal is always the same: to overturn existing statutes of limitations for private (but not public) institutions. Once these safeguards go, the "legalized looting" --- to quote one angry Catholic parent --- can begin."

This article by Mr. Maier is part of a major coordinated bishops' campaign to discredit survivors and their attorneys in their struggle to reform outdated and unjust statutes of limitations (SOL) laws dealing with sex crimes against children and to introduce "window" legislation. A legislative window gives survivors access to the civil justice system in those cases where the statute of limitations has run and has thus precluded them from any chance at receiving justice.

The ultimate motivation for the bishops' campaign is fear—fear of the truth that the discovery process of America law promises. Discovery is the pre-trial phase in a lawsuit in which each party can request documents and other evidence or can compel the production of evidence by using a subpoena, a deposition, or other discovery devices. Bishops fear lawsuits because the discovery process will expose how pervasive and how high up in the Church hierarchy the corruption of the cover-up of abusive priests goes. By championing the status quo of short, outdated, and unjust SOLs and keeping windows legislation at bay, bishops and their hirelings like Mr. Maier, who is the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Denver, hope to keep the lid on the extent of the corruption.

The bishops and their spokespersons, Mr. Maier prominent among them, use the not-so-gentle art of propaganda to attempt to re-frame issues. The real issues are sexual crimes

by priests and bishops against minors; the attendant cover-up of these crimes at the highest levels of the Catholic Church; why and how the cover up occurred; and the finances associated with these activities.

We are players in a high-stakes poker game. The bishops and their spokespersons understand that what is ultimately at stake is the authority of the bishops. The bishops' goal is always the same: protecting their power base of authority. The real legalized looting Mr. Maier should be referring to is the looting by the bishops of the moral integrity of the Catholic Church by their cover-up of clerical sex crimes against children and their outrageous lobbying, using our money, against reforming outdated and unjust statutes of limitations laws for child sex abuse.

“How can a church community defend itself when an alleged perpetrating priest is dead, and so is every other witness except the accuser? But this has happened again and again.”

Here Mr. Maier equates the church community with derelict bishops. We must remember: WE ARE THE CHURCH! Not the bishops alone. Our Church's priority should not be on a no-holds-barred legal defense of the institutional Church's financial interests, but justice for the survivors in accordance with gospel values.

“More than 1,000 new plaintiffs came forward in California during a 2003 suspension of the statute of limitations. So far, California Catholic dioceses and religious orders have paid out roughly \$250 million to plaintiffs, and the bleeding continues.”

How much have California Catholic dioceses paid their attorneys to keep the lid on this whole sordid moral mess?

Note the use of the unsubstantiated word “bleeding.” The important bleeding is not financial; it is bleeding in the very moral fabric of the church. Propaganda clotting medicine and stop-gap legal tourniquets won't stop this kind of bleeding. Bishop Tom Gumbleton has the remedy for this kind of moral disaster. Here's what the good bishop says: “When every bishop in every diocese cooperates in bringing about a genuinely just resolution of every charge of sexual abuse, I believe we will once more be perceived as credible moral teachers. Thus, what is good for the victims will likewise be good for the Church.” Amen, Bishop Tom Gumbleton!

It's impossible to tell the extent of the financial “bleeding” because the bishops won't tell us how much their assets amount to (yes, friends, their assets--we gave it to them without any strings attached; check this out with your local canon or civil lawyer). For example, based on estimates of the market value of real estate holdings of the Tucson diocese and the Los Angeles archdiocese and on the \$100 million payout to survivors by the Orange County, CA, diocese, for example, we are not talking about financial bleeding but about an annoying minor scratch that can be covered by a band-aid purchased by wealthy Catholics. What can't be covered by a band-aid is the moral state of the hierarchy. One of the many facts The Tidings won't tell you is how much Cardinal Mahony spends on his attorneys each month to stonewall victim-survivors and keep the real issues out of the American court system and off the front page of the Los Angeles Times. I'd like to

see this monthly legal cost figure published in the Los Angeles archdiocesan "newspaper."

"It's a classic display of entrepreneurial skill --- the fruit of years of carefully cultivating victims' anger, media gloating, the hostility of some lawmakers toward the Church, confusion and guilt by Church leaders, and resentment among the faithful."

This is a classic case of attacking the accuser, just like a defense lawyer tries to go after the reputation of a rape victim in front of a jury to save his client from jail time. The real classic display of entrepreneurial skill and world-class chutzpah, is by the bishops, with their years of fumbling attempts to cover up what happened to victims, bashing the media, calling their opponents in state legislatures anti-Catholic, and attempting to make the faithful feel guilty about their righteous anger.

"The effect on American Catholic life is catastrophic. "

The major catastrophic effect on American Catholic life is the disgust and loss of hope on the part of many Catholics caused by the disclosure of priests abusing children, many bishops covering it up, and much of the laity remaining silent about the whole sorry mess. The cover up continues by the bulk of bishops who won't publicize the names of those priests against whom credible allegations of crimes have been made.

"There's no 'Catholic Superfund' to pay for these massive, retroactive sex-abuse settlements, no secret pile of ecclesial wealth."

Sure, there's a pile of ecclesial wealth. But it's no secret. Anyone following the diocesan bankruptcy proceedings in Spokane (WA) or Portland (OR) knows this. The pile of wealth is the real estate holdings of the institutional Church, your parish church (and school and so on) and mine. I'm not saying we should liquidate our parish churches and schools, but we all have been and are complicit by our silence in the sexual abuse by clergy. Many of us Catholics sat on our hands and did nothing about clerical sexual abuse of children until the Boston Globe shocked some of us into what has been, in toto, minimal action to date.

"Insurance, even in the best circumstances, covers only a modest portion of the total damages."

Mr. Maier may have made an editorial, or perhaps, let's hope, a Freudian slip. A good bishop defender would have said "the total damages demanded" rather than "total damages." Some insurance companies won't pony up because they claim, and who can argue with them, that when bishops obstruct justice no insurance money should be paid.

"In some dioceses, insurance companies are suing the Church to avoid payment."

Insurance companies are suing the bishops, not the church. Remember Vatican II said, that "we" are the church, not the bishops.

"In the end, the people who will pay the most for this crippling attorneys' scam are our families -- and our children."

The real scam is much older than all of us – the decades-long abuse of children and the (ongoing) cover up by Church officials.

”Retroactive liability’ has nothing to do with real healing for sexual abuse victims. It involves the financial and legal mugging of innocent Catholic families today, for alleged events that happened decades ago and in which they played no part. It amounts to punishing the innocent in the name of lost innocence.”

Are we Catholics innocent? I don’t think so. Remember there are sins of omission. We were silent, and many of us still remain silent, when we knew/know priests raped kids and bishops protected the abusers and transferred them into unknowing parishes. How many of us have stood up and asked for resignations of bishops (e.g., in Chicago and in Santa Rosa, CA) who are guilty of not complying with mandatory legal reporting requirements when they first learn of a priest under their supervision having credible allegations of sexual abuse against a minor? Jesus wasn’t silent about injustice in his day, nor should we be silent about injustice in ours.

“The priests I knew growing up were good men --- men I wanted to emulate without exception. But I also have two friends, and probably a third, whose sons were sexually abused by priests in decades past. They’ve struggled with that traumatic experience ever since. Like all Catholic parents in the last four years, my wife and I have listened to stories of clergy sexual abuse with a mixture of pain, disgust, and frustration. We look at our own four children --- especially Dan, who has Down syndrome --- and we try to imagine what our attitude toward God, or the Church, might be today if they’d been hurt. More importantly, we’ve tried to pray ourselves into a deeper understanding of the wounds in the lives of young people damaged by sexual abuse.”

Prayer helps, but I suggest that the best way to get a deep understanding of the wounds in the lives of young, middle-aged, and older people damaged as children by sexual abuse by priests is to listen to abuse survivors through attendance at SNAP meetings or at legislative hearings to reform outdated and unjust SOL laws in your own state of Colorado.

”Of course, we’ll never fully understand that pain, any more than an outsider can fully understand the experience of raising a disabled child. But as a parent, I also know that real justice is not served by creating a new class of victims --- innocent Catholic families and communities today --- in the name of helping other victims.”

As I said above, we, the laity, are not innocent. We, all of us, are the Church, a Church in which lay people have had little to nothing to say about Church governance, because popes and bishops have gathered, especially over the last 150 years, imperial power unto themselves. Many of us have been unaware of, or silently complicit in this slow, painful, destructive historical process. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. That principle has been demonstrated blatantly by the way the bishops have handled the sex abuse crisis.

”Changing the civil liability rules after the fact is not justice, nor is bankrupting Catholic parishes and dioceses.”

Changing the civil liability rules, both before and after the fact, for childhood sex abuse victims is precisely that—justice. Didn’t we pay retribution to Japanese-Americans who

were unjustly interred during World War II? Aren't there affirmative action programs in place to address past racial discrimination?

“Bankruptcy” is a scare word that bishops use. How can a bishop claim bankruptcy without making public a consolidating balance sheet of all diocesan assets, including every parish's financial and real estate holdings? The answer is simple: Combine world-class chutzpah and P.T. Barnum's aphorism that a sucker is born every minute with a large group of deferential, passive Catholics who buy the bishops' party line without employing some common sense, some critical thinking.

“It's [bankruptcy] a form of financial and legal violence that will continue until the money's gone --- or we force it to stop.”

When a priest slams a 12-year-old boy face down on the floor of a Church sacristy and rams his erect penis up the boy's anus, that's real violence. That's the kind of crime we're dealing with. That 12-year-old boy, those closest to him, and the entire Body of Christ must deal with that rape and its aftermath for decades. Part of dealing with that crime is to provide the best therapy we can and to compensate adequately that boy and his loved ones for their pain and suffering.

“As a Catholic, I believe I have a duty to help sexual abuse victims heal. And I have an equal obligation to the Catholics who came before me, and the ones who will come after me, to pass along the Faith and the resources with which I was entrusted. They're not mine to throw away.”

The obligations are no where near equal. The most important resources are the moral ones, not the financial ones. The bishops have squandered and continue to squander their moral resources, their moral authority. The bishops are throwing away, squandering, their moral resources by sponsoring the writing of grossly misleading articles like this one.

“It's revealing that, in Colorado and elsewhere, some of the biggest supporters of ‘retroactive liability’ are disaffected, angry, self-described Catholics who resent the Church for her teaching on abortion, “emergency” contraception, embryonic stem-cell research, the death penalty, immigration, Iraq --- the list of complaints is endless. Too often, Catholics of my generation seem to be diving headlong into an assimilation gone perverse, moved by a spirit of revenge against the Church for simply daring to be herself and not a theater prop for their own egos. And nothing serves her enemies --- including the sex-abuse litigation machine --- better than when the Church's own children join in tearing her down.

When you can't fight the message, attack the messenger. It's as if we have been raped and you, the win-at-any-cost defense attorney, is going after the rape victim in the court of public opinion. Here again Mr. Maier portrays those seeking justice for survivors and reform to help future children as the bad guys. The real issue is the duplicity of the bishops. In real estate, it's location, location, location. With the bishops, it's deflection, deflection, deflection. Survivors and Church reformers are not tearing the Church down; the bishops have been doing that—and unfortunately doing an effective job—since the sex abuse crisis began, by applying their culture of silence, denial, and deceit. We're not the bad guys in all of this; the bishops are.

If reform-minded Catholics were looking to tear the Church down, we would do so from outside our faith communities; but we're not leaving. We are staying the course and working at repairing the unthinkable damage that has been done.

“American Catholics today are like sleepwalkers who dream they're awake --- who think they're engaged with and accepted by their surrounding secular culture. In reality, we're getting robbed of our identity and resources while we slumber. It's time to wake up.”

These are words that grow out of the numbing, closed culture of the institutional Church. Our identity is as followers of Jesus who stood up for the oppressed. I say again: Our major resources are moral ones, not financial ones. I agree that it is time for all Catholics to wake up—to the vicious campaign by the bishops and their employees against sorely needed reform of unjust statutes of limitations laws and windows legislation.

BOOK Review

Seeking Wholeness: Women Dealing with Abuse of Power in the Catholic Church
Marie Evans Bouclin, Liturgical Press, 2006. Reviewed by Anne Southwood, VOTF
Boston, MA

[Bouclin was a personal assistant to her bishop when he read press coverage of her participation in workshops for churchwomen; she was demoted and later resigned. This book grew out of the women she met in the workshops and the many who contacted her following her departure from Church employment.]

The author has a background in translation of theology and ethics for episcopal synods in Ontario, Canada. The book is based on in-depth interviews with abuse survivors, one-third of whom are nuns and lay religious.

Bouclin has produced a strong-minded book on the subject of victimization of women within the Church structure. Her sources include theologians Anne Carr, Anne Wilson Schaef, Elizabeth Johnson, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Schussler recommends the book as “important to anyone concerned with violence against women in religion” and calls it a “must” for Catholic women, bishops, and counselors.

Bouclin confronts an unquantified “taboo” subject. Her introduction quotes Fr. Thomas Doyle in reaction to the John Jay Report: “There are far more age-appropriate victims, most of whom are women.” The Bouclin identifies the structures that set up a systemic abuse of power ranging from expected work load to sexual abuse. The outcome is clear for Bouclin; she says, “priestly power itself becomes the sacred reality.”

Her own demotion after participating in a workshop on women in the Church wedged Bouclin into supporting the healing of others, as victims began to relate their own stories in sympathy. Abuse counselors and women with theological training worked to begin a support group attractive to hesitant victims. “Prepared to search for answers with them rather than provide ready made ones,” it aimed at personal *metanoia* [Gk., “change of heart”] allowing new understanding of discipleship.

Bouclin states that the most damaged women are victims of sexual abuse by their spiritual advisor. She admits that participants in a constructed support group can have limited success, some remaining dysfunctional for years. Why? Bouclin quotes Schaef on the strong phenomenon of co-dependence within the Church structure, calling it an abnormal addictive disease process. Becoming whole again involves stages of grief. A few disturbing “typical” case studies distilled from the raw data for the purposes of the book make the difficulty of the healing process evident.

A female support group, called necessary to healing, makes clear the quintessential struggle between faith and tackling the Church systemic flaws. Bouclin faults our training in the redemptive value of suffering as one cause of willingness to assume guilt and the sin of the priest. Survivors must recognize spiritual abuse and take responsibility for their growth to regain self image. Bouclin notes that forgiveness and reconciliation can be problematic. She quotes a survivor of clergy sexual abuse: “It is the weak who are asked to forgive the unrepentant strong. Forgiveness is between equals.” Since most cases never get to court, an admission of guilt or reconciliation is impossible.

The Holy Spirit working in the daily lives of women—gaining personal access to the sacred—is a source of healing for Bouclin. Meditation training is proposed; speaking truth to power is another. These can be catalysts for *metanoia*. *Bouclin contends that the spiritual power of Church plays on a clergy-laity divide which, effectively, absolves the laity from responsibility for their faith.* Catholic laity remain in a state of spiritual infancy. Devout and vulnerable women are therefore easily susceptible to being misled and abused. Opening Church structures to greater inclusivity is another Bouclin remedy; she states that the whole idea of priesthood instituted for celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice at Mass needs to be revisited in light of new theologies.

Meanwhile, many survivors have only each other, some existing during recovery in a borderland calling themselves Catholics but in exile from the institutional Church. Sadly, at publication time, Bouclin knew of no other effort in any diocese to support their recovery. This makes one question if there is any such effort in our own major dioceses. This is a necessary, if disturbing book, which might generate such an effort.