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For Immediate Release

After 36 Years, All He Gets Is 30 Days? VOTF Calls the Excommunication of Fr. Bourgeois the True Scandal

In a letter to the Papal Nuncio Voice of the Faithful demands a second look

November 25, 2008 – Boston –Voice of the Faithful calls on the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to withdraw the demand by the Catholic Church that Fr. Roy Bourgeois recant his decision, made in good conscience, to support the ordination of women.

Having served the Church for 36 years as a Maryknoll priest, Fr. Bourgeois received precisely thirty (30) days -- not even one day for each year of service -- to recant his position or be expelled from the Church he so clearly loves. How scandalous that the Catholic Church can move so rapidly when its authority is challenged, yet the same Church has failed, after years of disclosures, to remove even one of the many American bishops who secretly and repeatedly enabled pedophilic predator priests to abuse Catholic children.

“Fr. Bourgeois arrived at his position through the dictates of his conscience,” said Dan Bartley, Voice of the Faithful president. “Where are the consciences of the Vatican officials who have scandalously failed to discipline those bishops who actively facilitated the abuse of Catholic children across the United States? Where is their sense of shame?”

In a letter to the editor of *National Catholic Reporter*, VOTF highlighted the most dramatic example of this disproportionate treatment by comparing Fr. Bourgeois to Cardinal Francis George. Fr. Bourgeois has been a widely respected champion of justice, but when he speaks his conscience on a sensitive issue, he incurs the Church’s ultimate penalty. Cardinal George, who acknowledged protecting child abusers who have endangered children, is today president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The ordination of women is of course an issue of great sensitivity in the Catholic Church. Just a few months after Fr. Bourgeois participated in the ceremony involving Janice Sevre-Duszynska, he was alerted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of his impending excommunication. In a letter addressed to the Papal Nuncio, VOTF responded to this threat, writing, “The speed of this action stands in vivid contrast to the action of the Holy See on what we regard as a far more damaging problem: public action on numerous priests accused of sexual abuse. Nearly 5,000 Catholic priests have abused more than 12,000 young people. Most of these priests, and the bishops who protected them, still remain active.”

The contrast is disturbing. Right or wrong, Fr. Bourgeois comes by his views honestly and with his conscience. He forthrightly admits what he has done. For this, he faces the Church’s ultimate penalty.

For more information about the letter to the Papal Nuncio or about Voice of the Faithful, please email Jessica at votfpr@votf.org or call 617-558-5252

Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) is a lay organization formed in 2002 in response to the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church. It started in the basement of a church in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and has since expanded worldwide with more than 150 Parish Voice affiliates and 30,000 members. The entire organization is committed to helping the Catholic Church.