

**Voice of the Faithful Catholic Reform Movement Will
Return to Hartford for Its 2015 National Assembly, April 18**

BOSTON, Mass., Aug. 19, 2014 – Voice of the Faithful®, a reform movement Roman Catholics that started in 2002, will hold its 2015 National Assembly on Saturday, April 18, at the Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford. The featured speaker will be Marie Collins, a Catholic clergy sexual abuse survivor from Ireland who is a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.



Collins has spoken out for many years on the need for change in the Catholic Church, better protection of children and justice for clergy sexual abuse survivors. She was a victim of this abuse while a patient in a Dublin children's hospital. She suffered for many years with depression, anxiety, panic attacks and agoraphobia as a result of her abuse. Her abuser was brought to justice in 1997.

Collins helped the Archdiocese of Dublin set up its Child Protection Service in 2003 and also that year became a founding director of the advocacy and counseling support group for abuse survivors called One in Four (Ireland). She was a member of the Lynott Committee (2003/2004), which worked on drafting the Catholic Church's all-Ireland child protection guidelines, "Our Children Our Church."

Along with other survivors, Collins lobbied the Irish government to set up a Dublin Archdiocese commission of investigation to look into the handling of abuse cases in the diocese. The Murphy Commission issued its report in November 2009.

Collins was a founding member of the Irish depression support group "Aware" and set up and worked on their voluntary helpline phone service for many years. She was involved with other survivors in the preparation of the Liturgy of Lament and Repentance for Clerical and Religious Sexual Abuse, which was held in St. Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin on Feb. 20, 2011, in the presence of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin and Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston.

In 2012 Collins gave her name to a new charity in Britain, The Marie Collins Foundation, and became a trustee. The charity helps those abused or exploited via the internet, mobile phone and such devices.

She has contributed chapters to the books *The Dublin/Murphy Report: A Watershed for Irish Catholicism* and *Dark Night of the Catholic Church: Examining the child sexual abuse scandal*. She was invited to speak about her experience as a victim of sexual abuse by a priest before Catholic Church leaders from around the world at the Vatican-sponsored symposium on child sexual abuse "Toward Healing," held at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in February 2012.

In March 2014 Pope Francis appointed Collins to his new Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Its first meeting took place in Rome in May 2014.

Workshops at the VOTF 2015 National Assembly are presently planned to cover diocesan financial accountability, restorative justice for clergy sexual abuse survivors, clergy/laity dialogue, advocacy training for the development of an ordained female diaconate and a panel discussion on clergy sexual abuse survivor support. Other features of the assembly will be announced soon.

Voice of the Faithful®: Voice of the Faithful® is a worldwide movement of faithful Roman Catholics working to support survivors of clergy sexual abuse, support priests of integrity and increase the laity's role in governance and guidance of the Church. More information is at www.votf.org.