

Austrian Priest Wows U.S. Reformers

Fr. Helmut Schuller gives U.S. Catholics much to consider

He started in New York City and crisscrossed the country for three weeks this summer, visiting 15 cities and bringing his Catholic Church reform message to more than 5,000 people. Fr. Helmut Schuller's speaking tour, *Catholic Tipping Point: Conversations with Helmut Schuller* (www.catholictippingpoint.org), was sponsored by Voice of the Faithful® and nine other Church reform organizations.

Fr. Schuller also met with many priests while in the U.S. and garnered considerable media coverage here, as well as in Germany, Austria, and other European countries.

Like his overflow audiences, Fr. Schuller seeks a more tolerant, open, just, and inclusive Church. In 2006, he was a founder of the Austrian Priests' Initiative, which issued an

"Appeal to Disobedience" that calls for several structural changes in the Church. The changes would address primarily the dramatic



First Church and Parish, Dedham, Massachusetts (Boston)

decrease in the number of priests worldwide, especially in Europe and the United States, which has contributed to the closing of parishes and loss of pastoral connection between priests and parishioners.

VOTF commends courageous priests like Fr. Schuller and supports especially his calls for transparency in Church governance, a greater lay voice in running the Church, optional celibacy for Catholic priests, and inclusiveness.


The venues for three of Fr. Schuller's stops were on Catholic properties, which prompted the respective archbishops to ban him from speaking there. The bishops' recalcitrance seemed to stimulate the faithful—650 attended in Boston, 800 in Detroit, and 350 in Philadelphia.



Fairview-Clifton German Language School, Cincinnati, Ohio



Wayne Memorial High School, Wayne, Michigan (Detroit)

VOTF and other tour organizers will be assessing the tour's benefits and building on its momentum for Church reform. They also will present to USCCB president Cardinal Timothy Dolan the thousands of red ribbons the faithful wore during the tour. The ribbons symbolize the flaming spirit of Pentecost and the ardent hope and goal of all faithful Catholic reformers—inclusion of the laity at every level of decision-making in the Church. 

Mandatory Celibacy: Requirement That Priests Not Marry Is Fundamentally Flawed

By Edward Greenan, Ph.D., Voice of the Faithful® Trustee

Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, are in crisis.

For the past 30 years theologians, ecclesiologists, sociologists, and historians have documented this crisis—one with great peril for the established Church but also, as in any crisis, one with potential for decisions and new choices.

I see those opportunities as a challenge for the laity, to address the rifts that divide the People of God from our ordained leadership. More, I see opportunities for lay people to lead in a situation that demands our voices be heard. The time is long past to examine the flaws in our ministerial social fabric. If our ordained hierarchical leadership cannot or will not address the centuries-long rift separating the baptized People of God, then the non-ordained baptized must step forward as Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium*, challenged us to do.

It is not pleasant to call our leaders to account. But the Church institution that seeks to nourish us spiritually is failing in its responsibility, and a primary cause of its failure is the negative aspects of clericalism—a mindset that elevates celibate males to a “ruling caste” status, thus creating an elitist barrier to unity, dividing the faithful in the Body of Christ from those who would minister.

Mandatory or compulsory celibacy feeds this clerical mindset. As Catholics we have heard centuries of pious exhortations and homilies that insist, “virginal men devote their time more fully to the service of God.” But celibacy too frequently is a promise not kept, a hollow promise that has instead contributed to centuries of injustice. Likewise, celibacy based on the concept that a life fully pleasing to God can only be lived by closing off the secular world has contributed to centuries of demeaning lay people and smothering the message of Christ.

Do I seek to denigrate the sincere celibacy of many over history? Never! For some brothers and sisters, celibacy is both a healthy and a positive choice. But many young men answer the call to a celibate life without fully grasping its demands. Then, as loneliness pervades their daily lives and reality sets in, many seek outlets to help them cope—and secrecy to hide their choices.



Our Church cloaks these lapses with a self-serving justification that nurtures the clergy caste and forbids official discussion even while today's research into theology, psychology, history, and social theory brings into focus the questionable contribution of mandatory celibacy to effective ministry.

The Benedictines provide a concise summary of the problems with mandatory celibacy:

"Clerical celibacy is called into question for various reasons: it is not intrinsic to priesthood; it is not essentially more perfect than married love; its historical origins are suspect, coming from a neo-Platonic view of sexuality and Old Testament ideas of ritual purity; there is evidence that its observation has always been problematic, at least for a significant minority, leading to the adage 'si non caste, tamen caute' ('if unchaste, be discreet'); celibacy, being a charism, cannot be imposed; it can, and again for a significant number does, lead to a stunted

Celibacy must be optional. The individual must decide for himself what path keeps him closest to Christ. Mandatory celibacy is an outright injustice to the People of God.

affective life and immaturity in relationships. The most significant argument against a law of celibacy, however, is the assertion that because of it the Christian people are in places being seriously deprived of the Eucharist."

From *"Celibacy of the Clergy,"* Ecclesia (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)

A most incisive and insightful comment from this analysis is the questioning of the hierarchy's framing of celibacy as a "charism." A charism is a free gift of the Almighty; it cannot be imposed upon a human being. When a man is called to the ordained ministry, who is able to decide if he has the charism? If it is the bishop, bishops from the earliest centuries have sadly failed in their discernment of those who sought ordination, because the history of celibacy does not offer evidence of mature and total dedication to celibate life.

Celibacy must be optional. Each individual must decide for himself what path keeps him closest to Christ. Mandatory celibacy is an outright injustice to the People of God. Individuals should have the right to choose whether to marry or not marry, regardless of their ministry.

(Continued on Page 4)

Planned Giving: The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Consider a planned gift and help secure the mission of Voice of the Faithful®

A planned gift is a gift created by you and your professional advisors to benefit a charity of your choice during your lifetime or after your death. Planned gifts often provide financial and/or tax benefits for you and your family and guarantee the long-term financial security of one or more charitable institutions about which you care.

One of the simplest and most popular options for planned giving is through a bequest in your will or a provision in your living trust:

- Bequests, large or small, cost nothing now. But this type of planned gift may provide you with a great deal of satisfaction because you know that your future gift will help ensure the sustainability of VOTF.
- A bequest can be a specific amount, a percentage of your estate or a particular piece of property. The value is generally deductible from the estate of the donor for estate tax purposes.
- Bequests are simple and flexible—you can change your mind and amend your will or living trust at any time.

Whether you are creating a new estate plan or amending your existing estate plan, we hope you will consider including a gift to VOTF. Your gift can create extraordinary opportunities and secure our mission.

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should have the means to contribute so freely. For everything is from you, and what we give is what we have from you.” 2 Chronicles 29:14

Types of Planned Giving

- Specific Bequest
- Residual Bequests
- Policy Beneficiary
- Charitable Remainder or Lead Trusts
- Policy Beneficiary
- Gift Annuity
- Funding with Assets

If you have questions or would like more information, contact **VOTF Development Coordinator, Jayne O'Donnell**, jodonnell@votf.org or 781-559-3360.

Specific Bequests

To make a specific bequest to VOTF, you would designate in your will a specific asset or amount of money you wish



to go directly to VOTF from your estate. The following language is a sample of an outright bequest: “I give and bequeath [asset description / cash amount] to Voice of the Faithful, Newton, Massachusetts, for its general charitable purposes.”

Residual Bequests

To make a residual bequest to VOTF, you designate in your will a percentage of the remaining value of your estate after all specific bequests have been made. The following language is a sample of a residual bequest: “I give and bequeath [percentage] of my residuary estate to Voice of the Faithful, Newton, Massachusetts, for its general charitable purposes.”

Account or Policy Beneficiary

You also can make VOTF a beneficiary of your retirement account or life insurance policy. Your retirement plan account (IRA, 401k, 403b) can pass directly to VOTF as your primary beneficiary or can be transferred to a deferred giving arrangement that will pay a family member income for life, after which the remaining assets pass to the organization, or you may make gifts of life insurance to VOTF. Donors also may purchase an insurance policy with VOTF as owner and sole beneficiary. All premiums paid by a donor are then tax-deductible.

Funding with Assets

Many types of assets can be used to fund a charitable or planned gift. These include cash, appreciated securities,

(Continued on Page 4)

(Planned Giving, Continued from Page 3)

real estate, personal property, IRAs/Retirement Plans, life insurance, and other assets. Gifts for general charitable purposes are most helpful in giving VOTF leaders the flexibility to apply the funds where they are needed most, or you designate your gift for a particular purpose consistent with the mission and strategic priorities of VOTF.

Charitable Remainder or Lead Trusts


You can create an irrevocable trust that you fund during your lifetime, or upon your death, that will provide financial benefits for both you or your family and VOTF over time.

Gift Annuity

If you need income, you can contribute principal to VOTF, and VOTF will guarantee a stream of income from that principal to you for life.

Contact VOTF

We can help you develop a plan for giving to VOTF that allows you to help VOTF and your family. Please feel free to contact us with any questions and let us know what charitable plans you have made for VOTF, so we may acknowledge your generosity and commitment.


Today, through the generosity of many like you, VOTF strives to model the behavior we ask from our Church: Christ-centered, open to the gifts of all, inclusive and loving towards all, accountable to all, and transparent in actions. 

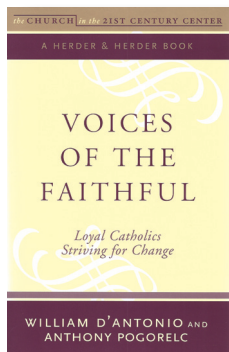
(Mandatory Celibacy, Continued from Page 3)

Celibacy also tends to breed misogyny, a side effect that Catholicism has unofficially propagated throughout its history, despite its frequent claims to the contrary. Mandatory celibacy has become a steel band that binds together injustice toward women, clericalism, and the closing of ministry to married men.

It was not always so. Marriage anchored the early Church leadership and community. The apostles, steeped in the Torah, understood that "it is not good for the human being to be alone." Moreover, for them marriage was not simply a resource for stable sexual partnership, it also was universally valued as the path for reaching individual and social fulfillment. Re-teaching the People of God that being wed is not a second-class spiritual status in the Church is crucial.

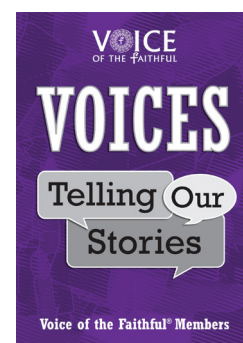
Elitism has been rampant for most of the Church's history. Vatican II, however, made it clear we are Church. The Council strongly affirmed the spiritual equality of all the People of God, lay and ordained, and attempted to counter this elitism. We can continue this by returning to optional celibacy for our ministers. Optional celibacy will rebuild a healthy ministry, a balanced ministry, and a leadership anchored in the reality of the human condition.

Visit VOTF's website homepage, www.votf.org, and under "Mandatory Celibacy Should Not Limit the Priesthood," find links to VOTF's paper *A Brief History of Celibacy*; the 2013 Action Plan; and *Crisis in the Priesthood: Conversations about Celibacy*, which contains links to resources that can be used to help change the Church's rules on mandatory celibacy. 



Voices: Then & Now

One book tells how VOTF began, and the other marks its tenth year. Both are available through VOTF's website **Books** page. Published in 2007 and still relevant as the story of VOTF's beginnings, *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change* presents "both the hard statistics about the group's (VOTF's) membership and frank and appreciative analysis of the group's influence." Ten years after VOTF's founding *Voices: Telling Our Stories* offers a glimpse into the ideals and ideas of individual VOTF members. To purchase these books, go to VOTF's homepage (www.votf.org), click **Books** at the top of the page, and when the **Books** page pops up, click on the books' covers. You'll receive a couple of good reads, and VOTF will receive a portion of the proceeds from Amazon.



VOTF Social Media—This newsletter can tell you about only a fraction of our important work. Although we send emails throughout the year to members, we also can stay connected through **Social Media**. If you haven't yet, **Like** us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/voiceofthefaithful); **Follow** us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/VOTFNational); and **Sign-Up** to receive email alerts from our blog (voicefaithful.wordpress.com). Stay in touch!



Keep the Faith, Change the Church

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Voice of the Faithful® is a worldwide movement of Roman Catholics working to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can participate actively in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. Our three goals are to support survivors of clergy sexual abuse; support conscientious priests; and shape structural change in the Church.

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