

Voice of the Faithful® 2014 Assembly Turning Talk into Action


JOIN US for a full day of presentations, workshops, prayer, and collegial collaboration at the **VOTF 2014 Assembly: Turning Talk into Action.**

Our two highly knowledgeable guest speakers will fill us in on all things Pope Francis and the Vatican. Six workshops will show us how to turn *talk into action*, and a panel of three specialists in mediation and healing will highlight *Pathways Toward Healing in a Reformed Church*.

John L. Allen, Jr., Associate Editor for Catholic news and analysis for *The Boston Globe*, who began the Vatican beat for *National Catholic Reporter* where he formerly was senior correspondent, will offer *Perspectives on Pope Francis & A Climate of Change*. **Fr. Thomas Reese, S.J.**, NCR senior analyst and former *America* magazine associate editor will offer thoughts on Pope Francis and Jesuit Spirituality.

Two of our **Workshops** will delve into diocesan and parish finances to find out how to track spending and how to keep parish collections safe. Others will cover what to do about clericalism; how optional celibacy could help “priestless” parishes; where female voices are and should be in our Church; and survivor support, spirituality and trauma.

The VOTF 2014 Assembly will take place Saturday, April 5, 2014, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Lunch is included in the \$80 per person registration fee. If you would like to stay overnight in Hartford, you may make reservations at the Marriott Hartford Downtown, located right next to the convention center, for only \$89 per night.

You can find more information, an online registration link, and downloadable registration form at www.votf.org. 

Longtime Volunteer Discusses Why VOTF?

When her hometown parish of St. Peter in Cambridge, Massachusetts, formed a Voice of the Faithful® group in early 2002, Millie Feloney was there. Other parishes, like St. John the Evangelist in Wellesley, Our Lady Help of Christians in Newton, and the Paulist Center in Boston, also were meeting, so she and her husband, Paul, began attending those meetings, too, and any others they could find.

“Many of the wonderful folks that I met (in the very beginning) and was bonding with,” Millie says, “eventually became the founders of VOTF.”

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Longtime VOTF volunteer Millie Feloney joins her grandson Timothy Fazekas at his graduation from Xavier Brothers High School in Westwood, Massachusetts.

By 2004, when plans for the Mass on the Common were being made, she was right in the middle of it all, and she's been in the middle ever since. The Mass was held that August to oppose parish closings and support clergy sexual abuse survivors, an historic event for VOTF and for Boston.

As Millie recalls the start of it all, she reflects on her first experiences. "On Jan. 6, 2002, the Boston Globe Spotlight Team published its first article revealing that the Boston Archdiocese was aware of the record of a priest sexually abusing children and had moved him around through several Greater Boston parishes," she says. "I went to college and majored with that priest's sister and knew the family pretty well. Then Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly announced the names of nearly 1,000 clergy sexual

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abuse victims that he had received from the Archdiocese of Boston." So, Millie says, she "stayed (with VOTF) and still stays involved."

Every Wednesday will find Millie in VOTF's headquarters office helping to record donations. She also belongs to the Winchester, Massachusetts, VOTF affiliate and regularly attends the Monday evening meetings at St. Eulalia's. The Winchester affiliate has met every Monday evening, not counting a few snow cancellations, ever since VOTF began in 2002.

Millie easily can be described as a cradle Catholic, dyed-in-the-wool New Englander, and hometown girl. Her great grandparents, he from Alsace-Lorraine and she from Ireland, met on Nantucket, where she was a house maid and he, a cooper who made whale oil barrels. They married and bought a three-story row house on Longwood Avenue in Roxbury, where he made beer barrels. Their one surviving child, Nellie, married the local cow farmer, Patrick Cleary. Their daughter, Mary Grace, married Jim Corcoran from Brookline, Millie's parents.

The Corcorans lived on the top of Mission Hill in Boston and were parishioners at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also known as the Mission Church. Millie and her sister, Elaine, attended Mission Grammar School, which their mother had attended. Eventually, both went to Emmanuel College in Boston on scholarships. Millie became a school teacher in Cambridge. She was introduced to her future husband,

Paul Feloney, by his sister, who was one of her college friends from Cambridge, and they married in 1960.

Then came Vatican II, promising lay involvement in the Church. Forty years later, when VOTF was formed, the Faithful were still waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, but the clergy sexual abuse scandal made it obvious to many laity that their Church needed them more than ever.

"I stayed (with VOTF) because the problem (of clergy sexual abuse) isn't going away," Millie says, "and I stay mostly because we're making a difference. For the last 12 years, we've continued to meet locally and nationally to educate ourselves and others about the sexual abuse of children and to commit ourselves to helping to protect them."

Millie and her colleagues also financially support survivors by helping some attend the SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) annual conference. In addition, she cites the work of two Boston-area sociologists who have studied the Winchester

VOTF movement and point out its positive effects on Catholics, the Church, and society. Also, Tennessee sociologist Tricia Bruce's VOTF study resulted in *Faithful Revolution: How Voice of the Faithful Is Changing the Church*, available on VOTF's website BOOKS page.

"The problem of sexual abuse within the Church is huge," Millie says. "I would hope that whatever good we do will be reflected within the whole Church ... I don't know if we've made the Church any better for our heirs, but I do know how much respect my own children and family have for me for continuing to do what I can to make children safer." **f**

The Enigma of Pope Francis

Pope Francis has ushered in a kinder, more pastoral papacy and speaks eloquently of the reforms needed. He

encourages us, but his actions are only just beginning to match his rhetoric. Is this the mark of a collegial, pastoral approach or the sad reality of dealing with entrenched bishops and the Vatican Curia?

Author and Catholic studies professor Paul Lakeland, Ph.D., has been observing Pope Francis and shares his views in the presentation *The Enigma of Pope Francis*, which was presented on Friday, October 25, 2013, at St. Eulalia Parish Hall, Winchester, Massachusetts. To see a video of professor Lakeland's talk, visit www.votf.org and use the link on the homepage.



VOTF Focuses on Prevention

April Is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

As April rolls around again, so does the observance of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a federal program to help protect children and strengthen families. A special month to focus attention certainly is a good idea, but having started when clergy child sexual abuse was first widely recognized, Voice of the Faithful® focuses keenly throughout the year on raising awareness, examining safety procedures, and helping prevent child sexual abuse by clerics.

With the debut of Pope Francis on the world stage and new hope that attaches to his tone and sentiments, we need to ask how this will affect the protection of children, the potential healing of survivors and justice to errant bishops.

In early December 2013, Pope Francis created a commission on abuse. The commission (as of yet unnamed) is expected to tell Church officials to collaborate with civil authorities and to report cases of abuse. Apparently, Pope Francis has been interpreted as wanting to shift the Church's focus to a more pastoral emphasis that seeks to address the needs of the victims. These measures are woefully overdue and would be welcome additions, if enforced. Time will tell.


Clearly, the January 16 -17 United Nations committee's investigation into the Catholic Church's adherence to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child has put the Vatican in the white-hot spotlight. All signatories are required "to take all appropriate measures to keep children from harm." This has not routinely been the case in the Church. You can access links to a great deal of news coverage surrounding the U.N report by reading the *Focus* column

in recent issues of VOTF's email newsletter *In the Vineyard*. Just click the "Publications" link at www.votf.org.

To date, the Vatican has not addressed the problem of bishops who shuffled pedophile priests to unsuspecting parishes, paid secret settlements, or in any other way have obstructed justice for victims. The one lone case of Bishop Finn in Kansas City being found guilty of endangering children, was reversed. Justice to offending bishops is critical to the healing process of victims.

So, how does VOTF fit into this situation? Our role is to continue to monitor what Pope Francis actually does to ensure the ongoing safety of children. We also will continue to raise our voices until our voices are heard. The *Survivor Support: Spirituality & Trauma* workshop facilitated by Tom Doyle at the VOTF 2014 Assembly on April 5, 2014, in Hartford, Connecticut (see www.votf.org for information), will explore this problem in depth.

On the local scene, each of us can:

- Work to promote reform of state statutes of limitation.
- Read carefully dioceses' child protection policies/guidelines for adult volunteers/employees.
- Take time to speak with your children/grandchildren about personal safety, boundaries and trusting their instincts, and encourage them to tell someone if an interaction doesn't feel right.
- Remember victims/survivors of sexual abuse and pray for their healing. 

Pope Francis Says / VOTF Says Where do Pope Francis and VOTF meet?


Voice of the Faithful® recently developed a paper on Church Governance that will be available soon on our website. As we wrote the paper, we compiled a list of Pope Francis' quotes from the first year of his papacy. Clearly, the Pope and VOTF are of one mind with regard to lay rights and responsibilities and the dangers of clericalism. We all know what VOTF says about these. Here are a few quotes from Pope Francis.

"All the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief... When the dialogue among the people and the bishops and the pope goes down this road and is genuine, then it is assisted by the Holy Spirit ... We should not even think, however, that 'thinking with the Church' means only thinking with the hierarchy of the Church." Pope Francis, *America* magazine, October 2013

"When there is no prophecy amongst the People of God, the emptiness that is created gets filled by clericalism. All memory of the past and hope for the future are reduced only to the present: no past promise, no future hope. But when clericalism reigns supreme, the words of God are sorely missed and true believers weep because they cannot find the Lord." Pope Francis on Vatican Radio, December 2013

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"This is hypocrisy that is the result of clericalism, which is one of the worst evils. I said as much to the bishops of the Latin American Bishops Council (CELAM) this summer in Rio de Janeiro: we need to conquer this propensity toward clericalism in houses of formation and seminaries too." Pope Francis interview with Antonio Spadaro, S.J., *La Civiltà Cattolica*

"At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making." Pope Francis Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel) 

From the VOTF Development Coordinator's Desk

You may support VOTF's good work in several ways.

Monthly Donor. You can **enhance your role** as a VOTF member as a monthly partner. By joining this growing circle of friends, your monthly gift helps keep VOTF's mission-oriented initiatives and projects front and center!

Why? Because we will spend less time fundraising. You'll gain satisfaction from knowing your dollars go toward our operating expenses. For examples, refer to "What it Takes to Keep the Lights On." Use the Montly Partners link in the left-hand menu on our website homepage at www.votf.org.

How? Our system is simple, automated, and may be cancelled at any time. To become a monthly donor, visit www.votf.org, click on **DONATE** at the top of the homepage, and then choose *Monthly* on the selection page. YOU can be a part of creating this critical mass.

Planned Giving. Bequests provide financial and/or tax benefits; guarantee VOTF's long-term financial security; offer great satisfaction by helping to sustain VOTF; can be a specific dollar amount, or property, or a percentage of your estate; and are simple and flexible. More details are available on our website; click on **Planned Giving** in the left hand column. You may also contact VOTF's office at jodonnell@votf.org or 781-559-3360.

Fulfill an Item from VOTF's Wish List. You may prefer to contribute the cost of a tangible item that is needed in the VOTF office. Wave your "magic wand" and make a wish come true!

Currently, we need to replace a desktop computer. (The computer's operating system is no longer supported by the manufacturer.) Cost: \$800.

The VOTF office is also in need of a printer. Cost: \$300.

The VOTF 2014 Assembly. As is true of any large undertaking, our April 5, 2014, Assembly at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford has many overhead costs associated with its presentation. Your donation to defray the cost of audiovisual needs, printed assembly materials, and transportation, lodging, meals, and stipends for our speakers would be greatly appreciated.

Through your loyal ongoing support, **together** we will "Keep the Faith," and we will "Change the Church."

Thank you very much.



Development Coordinator

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.

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!**



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