

## Coastal Delmarva VOTF: A Movement of the Spirit



**Coastal Delmarva (Delaware) VOTF leaders, left to right, Joe Lane, Bethany Beach; Eleanor LeGates, Ocean View; John Sullivan, Dagsboro; Steve Trodden, Bethany Beach; and Virginia (Skip) Sullivan, Dagsboro.**

"In all our time together, we have always seen the Spirit acting in whatever was happening," says John Sullivan of Dagsboro, Delaware, a Coastal Delmarva VOTF affiliate leader.

That 'time' goes back to Delmarva's formational meeting in October 2003. Since then, "We have been like water constantly dripping on a rock," says Eleanor LeGates of Ocean View, constantly meeting with Church officials and sending letters, cards, and emails, along with follow-ups, and even buying newspaper ads and sending Easter cards to all the diocese's priests and a Christmas card to the bishop.

"We wore him down," says John's wife Virginia (Skip) of Wilmington Bishop Francis Malooly. "We were charming but direct and would not go away, and a key component to our successful relationship has been always to offer to help him in any way we could." They have met repeatedly with Bishop Malooly and sent him a written report of their deliberations regarding the 2014-15 Family Synod.

They have achieved an enviable rapport with Malooly and St. Ann (parish) Pastor John Klevence. Delmarva is one of several VOTF affiliates that meet on church property. Bishop Malooly even tells them to keep those cards and letters coming each time they meet. The Spirit surely was working in bringing Malooly and Klevence to us, John says.

John adds that the Spirit definitely was working when we received permission to meet on church property. After we asked, "the pastor got back to us and said, 'I have prayed about this, and I do not want your group to think that you are second rate Catholics, so come with me and we'll go to the parish secretary and get it done.'"

"I want to reiterate what John said about the Spirit being with us ever since we started," Eleanor says. "We prayed hard, and the Spirit has been faithful and nurturing. Prayer is just so important." Prayer was always central to our meetings, says Steve Trodden of Bethany Beach. "Our prayer deepened and broadened as our community matured. Now, we're as much a faith community as a VOTF affiliate."

Delmarva's leaders say the Spirit's help was obvious during their work to help pass the state's 2007 Child Victims Act, which removed the statute of limitations for civil suits and opened a two-year window for past survivors. "Prayer is a form of doing," Eleanor says, "and we needed to pray for the church, and prayer and sharing played a big part in keeping us going after the Child Victims act was passed."

Delmarva now is involved in planning for a parish evangelization program at St. Ann's. Steve says they have pointed out that "evangelization includes not only bringing those *out* in, but also evangelizing *within*." The prayer and faith these VOTF members share within their group models the strong community and renewal the bishop seeks for evangelization within parishes, the diocese and beyond.

"It's been so important over the years to be a prophetic voice," John says. "We're called to act, and the movement of the Spirit is the only, amazing explanation for the goodwill, the concern to reach others that's been generated."

"We've had many discussions about where we go from here," Steve says. "We need to continue to exist, to meet, to listen, to pray." Several priests and deacons who meet with them even take their prayer outlines back to staff meetings. "There are ripples that go we don't even know where," Skip says.

See [www.votf.org/plus-the-page-url](http://www.votf.org/plus-the-page-url) for samples of Delmarva's agendas.

# Harvard scholar discusses leadership & vision

Voice of the Faithful can “provide the space for people to have conversations they are not allowed to have,” said Ronald Heifetz, a Harvard Kennedy School scholar, during a fundraising event last fall.

Heifetz, who coined the term “adaptive leadership,” is a founder of the Kennedy School’s Center for Public Leadership and a cofounder of Cambridge Leadership Associates, which consults to corporate, nonprofit, and public sectors worldwide. He spoke to an audience of primarily VOTF members about how his leadership ideas can help organizations like VOTF make gradual, yet meaningful, progress during changing and often challenging times.

VOTF can advocate for change from within the Church community, but the Church, “a social structure” that “needs order to make the group work,” is constrained by authority it believes is necessary to maintain order, Heifetz noted. So, the Church cannot make the changes necessary to address issues and solve problems. This perspective “can help us understand what led the Church” into scandal.

The Church needs VOTF, he continued, to identify “adaptive issues” and lead people to develop solu-



tions without resorting to authority. Such issues reflect a gap between aspirations and current conditions. Solving these issues takes a long time and involves using the community’s collective intelligence to foster the organization’s health.

Svea Fraser of Wellesley, Massachusetts, a VOTF founder, recalled Heifetz remarking that we “need to develop more capacity to meet challenges adaptively,” rather than default to technical solutions we already know. These usually lead to failure. The Church is not a business that will fail

if it does not adapt, so it continues doing what it knows how to do, repeating the same mistakes. Long-time VOTF member Frank McConville of Wellesley, Massachusetts, put it this way: “Leadership requires vision and the ability to influence a community by the truth and the benefits of a proposition which usually has been acquired by participation, dialogue, questioning, and testing to reach a consensus.”

For VOTF, change has taken place slowly and not necessarily obviously. People are not always “anxious to be enriched by our opinions,” Heifetz said. But attitudes about the scandal have changed, and the language of transparency, accountability, and clericalism has been adopted. Even so, VOTF is presented with an “adaptive challenge.”

A gap still exists between where VOTF would like the Church to be and where it is. The Church views any suggestion to change its structures as loss. “We’re asking the Church to exercise competencies it doesn’t have,” Heifetz said. “People resist change that is perceived as loss, and you have to respect the losses people will suffer during change.”

With regard to the Church, all three categories of loss are represented in people who have left the pews. Getting them back and keeping others in their seats is going to take a long time. VOTF might help accomplish this and attract new members by developing new ways of being community or creating sources of value for people other than solving the clergy sexual abuse scandal. VOTF was born in crisis and needs to identify new crises or find out how to continue in the absence of crises, according to Heifetz.

“Adaptive change in an insulated organization like the Church takes a long time, with a lot of people staying in the game and not giving up,” Heifetz said. “Real progress has been made, but it’s going to take a couple of generations, especially around an issue like how clergy handle sexuality, before the problem will be solved.”

VOTF member Ron Petitti of Braintree, Massachusetts, said Heifetz basically wanted us to “know that VOTF is bringing peace and hope to the Church and its members, so don’t stop.

## Vatican expert on clergy abuse talks about worldwide scandal

“You hear it still now but not so much from bishops and provincials because they know that they have cases all over the world. What I say is just ask the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith where all the cases, where all the allegations are reported and ask them which country would not have a case, and there is no country in the world where this is true. So, in every corner of the globe you have the transgressions, you have crimes of sexual abuse of minors committed by priests, deacons, sometimes also by bishops ... I’ve traveled over the last four or five years to 35 countries on five continents and in every part of the world you encounter the problem, and people know about it. What is different is how they speak and if they speak at all about it ... In 80 percent of the countries the media has not really taken up on this.”

*Fr. Hans Zollner, S.J., is Academic Vice Rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he is also President of the Centre for Child Protection, and he is a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. His comments are from an interview by Fr. Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., CEO of Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation, on Salt and Light television’s “Witness” program, Sept. 4, 2016.*

# Our Faithful Revolution

Voice of the Faithful, a community of Roman Catholics committed to service and reform, has always sought to *Keep the Faith, Change the Church*—to change Church structures and processes that impede lay voices, as well as cultures that exhibit clericalism, separating clerics from laity rather than binding them pastorally and collegially.



Clericalism stifles the people of God. Pope Francis has condemned clericalism repeatedly, saying, “the spirit of clericalism is an evil that is present in the Church today, and the victim of this spirit is the people, who feel discarded and abused.”

Voice of the Faithful’s founding is well known, exploding onto the scene in 2002 as visibility of Catholic clergy sexual abuse broadened, specifically in the Boston Archdiocese, chronicled effectively by *The Boston Globe* in 2002 and 2003.

The movement spawned a frenzy of activity, fueled by anger at and frustration with a Church that had let us down. If you were to review the *Globe* sto-

ries, other media coverage of the crisis, and books about Voice of the Faithful, you would discover that Voice of the Faithful is credited with much of the rhetoric calling the Church to task.

By 2017 Voice of the Faithful, with commitment and tenacity, has settled into the long struggles to help change Church structure and culture so that scandal has no fertile ground in which to grow. Progress has been slow, but steady. We offer Catholics a community within the community of the Church where, as the people of God, we find a way to remain faithfully Catholic without giving up our baptismal right and responsibility to offer opinions and foster dialogue on issues important to the Church.

This is a post-Vatican II point of view well expressed by Fr. Louis Cameli, author of more than a dozen books and Chicago’s Delegate for Formation and Mission. In an interview about post-Vatican II pontiffs in *National Catholic Reporter*, Cameli said he “sees underlying, foundational points of continuity in the post-conciliar era.” Two of his points are especially pertinent for Voice of the Faithful:

- “Communion: The Church is a set of interlocking and dynamic relationships among people and with the Triune God (in contrast to a primarily organizational-institutional-structural model of the Church).
- “Dialogue: The Church is the place where

believers speak and listen to each other, and it is the community of faith that speaks with and listens to the world. (This is the *ecclesia discens et docens* [Church teaching and learning] and, therefore, is a dynamic community instead of a static ‘container of truth.’)”

Communion and dialogue are Voice of the Faithful watchwords. We are a community concerned about providing a voice for the voiceless and have introduced clericalism, accountability, and transparency into the Church reform language, language reiterated by Pope Francis.

We have always supported survivors and promoted programs that better protect children, but we have focused most directly on finding, naming, and publicizing the underlying causes of scandal that must be addressed to stop and prevent scandal.

Kathleen McPhillips, a lecturer at the University of Newcastle, framed the challenge Voice of the Faithful seeks to meet. In a *Newcastle Herald* article called “The royal commission has exposed a Catholic Church in desperate need of change,” she said:

“It is imperative [that] current religious groups undertake research into why this happened, as well as resourcing for the healing of survivors . . . Understanding how this happened is essential to the health of our community, and to the creation of new Church structures which are transparent, inclusive, accountable and respectful of women and children. The Church needs to show it is serious about cultural change – this is yet to be effectively demonstrated.”

## Priest association promotes ordination of women deacons and married men as priests

Fr. Bob Bonnot, for the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, sent a letter to U.S. bishops at their fall General Assembly asking them to address several issues. Prominent among these was the ordination of women deacons and married men as priests.

The AUSCP first asked bishops to consider these options in 2013, following groups like Voice of the Faithful and FutureChurch. In 2015, AUSCP

reiterated the 1970s call of the National Federation of Priests Council for the bishops to study the question. Bonnot noted that Pope Francis has asked for fresh consideration of women as deacons.

The letter stated, in part: “AUSCP sees these proposed ordinations as matters of prudence that can help address the pastoral needs of the faithful. By 2019, half of the active diocesan priests are

able to retire, so the number of priests available to serve full-time will rapidly decline. Many now retired priests are aging out of service. We AUSCP priests, mostly 50 and above, urge you as a bishop, with our bishops collectively, to give us reason to hope that there is relief on the horizon. We are also concerned that this shortage will thrust young priests into crushing responsibilities before they are adequately prepared.”



# A Life of Faith

By VOTF Trustee Margaret Roylance

At Voice of the Faithful, we hear many inspiring stories about people who have lived their lives in ways that really make a difference. Sometimes I think of them as profiles in faithfulness. I have been privileged this last month to hear one of those stories, about Marillyn Frances Craig.

Marillyn, a native of Lakeland, Florida, began her career as a public school teacher but then obtained a Master's in Library Science from George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. Degree in hand, she joined the staff at Vanderbilt University in 1968 as a reference librarian.

There, she found her calling at the Jean and Alexander Heard Library and worked at Vanderbilt until her retirement in 1997. Also in 1997, she received the first annual Mary Jane Werthan Award in recognition of her work developing a women's studies bibliography at Vanderbilt.

Marillyn also worked to make a difference as a Catholic. She was a member of The Cathedral of the Incarnation in Nashville and a very active volunteer at Catholic Charities in Nashville. She joined VOTF in 2004, supporting our mission and goals by regular donations and responding when we reached out to our members for a specific need like running an ad in *The New York Times* calling for accountability of Catholic Bishops who had covered up clergy sexual abuse.

She was a woman who loved our church and threw her heart into its good works, but she was willing to call for change when she believed it was needed.

Marillyn Craig made a difference in many ways, but one of them did not become known until after she passed away last July. She remembered VOTF in her will. A woman of modest lifestyle, as her story makes clear, Marillyn used her time and treasure to support the causes she held dear in life and to carry on her will after she was gone.

She granted VOTF what is called a residual bequest, designating a percentage of her estate's value to VOTF after all her bills are paid and other outright bequests distributed.

That bequest, from this modest, faithful Catholic woman, will provide support for months of work here at VOTF: helping us keep and strengthen our faith while moving our church toward greater justice and openness.

Let us all remember Marillyn in our prayers of gratitude for her life and good works and consider exercising our will power as she did!

## Theologian Discusses a Pastoral Magisterium

"I propose that one of the most important contributions that Pope Francis is making to the church concerns his efforts to exercise precisely the kind of pastoral magisterium that Pope John XXIII hoped for. It is a form of teaching authority marked by six distinctive features:

1. A pastoral magisterium serves a synodal, listening church.
2. A pastoral magisterium relies on the symbolic gesture more than the judicial act.
3. A pastoral magisterium is committed to the decentralization of authority.
4. A pastoral magisterium exhibits an appropriate doctrinal humility.
5. A pastoral magisterium serves the practice of discernment and the formation of conscience.
6. A pastoral magisterium is reluctant to pronounce prematurely on controverted issues.

"As our pastoral leaders become accustomed to meeting the people 'in the streets,' and listening to their concerns, and attending to their wounds, they will know, as through a pastoral 'connaturality,' how the church's doctrine can best be employed, or revised, to more faithfully proclaim the Gospel. That is what a genuinely pastoral magisterium looks like."

*"Doctrinal Authority in the Francis Era: Toward a Pastoral Magisterium in Today's Church," by Richard R. Gaillardetz, Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology, Boston College, in Commonweal magazine, Dec. 19, 2016*

**VOICE**  
OF THE FAITHFUL

Keep the Faith, Change the Church

P.O. Box 423, Newton, MA 02464  
781-559-3360, Fax 781-559-3364, [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org)

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. We support survivors of clergy sexual abuse, support priests of integrity, and work to help shape structural change in the Church.

**KEEP UP-TO-DATE — Sign up to receive our free *In the Vineyard* e-newsletter at [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org).**