

## How you help us make a difference

### VOTF studies online financial transparency in U.S. dioceses

Voice of the Faithful's Finance Working Group completed several months of diligent effort last November when it released its report on the degree of financial transparency that U.S. dioceses demonstrate on their websites.



The group's report, called "Measuring and Ranking Diocesan Online Financial Transparency," revealed wide disparity among the 177

U.S. dioceses (145 dioceses and 32 archdioceses) and concluded they exhibited a level of openness well below what could be reasonably expected of an organization anywhere near the size of the U.S. Catholic Church.

Overall scores ranged from 59 to 10 out of a possible 60. The full report is available at [votf.org](http://votf.org), and the report was mailed to all U.S. bishops who lead dioceses.

"Many years of doing government-sponsored research and development left me with a healthy respect for the degree of financial accountability required from those who receive taxpayers' money," said Margaret Roylance, a VOTF trustee and Finance Working Group chair. "We wanted to learn if a comparable level of accountability for donations to the church was possible and could Catholics find and easily interpret their dioceses' finances from information on diocesan websites, where most people would look?"

The study did not attempt to discover why wide discrepancies in scores exist, but the degree of financial transparency

*(Continued on Pg. 2)*

**VOICE**  
OF THE FAITHFUL

*Working together to keep the faith and change the Church*

**VOTF 2018 Conference: Progress and Promise...**

*Register now for Early Bird Special Price*

Promoting *Progress & Promise*, Voice of the Faithful's 2018 Conference takes place Oct. 6, 2018, in Providence, Rhode Island. Register and make hotel reservations at [votf.org](http://votf.org). Join us for thought-provoking discussion.

Guest speakers will offer in-depth, up-to-date analyses of the clergy sexual abuse scandal, the laity's role in the Church as a legacy of Vatican II, Pope Francis' reforms, and the potential for greater lay leadership.



**Marie Collins**, well known international clergy sexual abuse survivor supporter, will return. Much has happened since she spoke at VOTF's 2015 conference in Hartford. Perhaps most interestingly, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, from which she resigned because of Vatican intransigence, is awaiting new members.



Also speaking will be Vatican II expert **Massimo Faggioli**. A professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, he brings a unique European/American point of view to Vatican II's legacy and Pope Francis' papacy.

VOTF's 2018 Conference takes place Saturday, Oct. 6, 2018, at the Providence Marriott Downtown. The cost is \$85/person during the Early Bird Special period. When the Early Bird Special ends, full price will be \$125/person. Oct. 6 is Columbus Day weekend, a popular time of the year for visitors to New England — so book your hotel room now. You can register and book your hotel room at [votf.org](http://votf.org).

## Finance Study *(Continued from Pg. 1)*

does not seem to correlate to size, amount of financial resources, geography or importance. For example, the nation's largest diocese, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, scored 45; New York, the second largest, scored 27. The Diocese of Yakima, Washington, with only about 70,000 Catholics, scored 55.

The study found that 61 dioceses posted no financial data, and 75 dioceses posted no parish financial guidelines. The report said this lack of transparency could mean these dioceses consider financial data and parish financial guidelines to be need-to-know information, and the laity – without whose financial support the hierarchy could not function – do not have a need to know.

The average overall score for all U.S. dioceses was 36, which would be 60% expressed as a percentage. If the study had measured dioceses on a pass/fail basis, this means the overall score would mean that half of the dioceses failed to achieve a passing grade.

"It is vital that bishops demonstrate to the laity that they believe in the importance of financial transparency by requiring that audited financial statements be published," said accounting professional Sandra Guynn, a VOTF trustee and Finance Working Group member, "and that financial best practices be implemented to protect parishes and dioceses against embezzlement and fraud."

Several bishops wrote to thank VOTF for the study, which will be repeated this summer. Some dioceses used their high scores to tout their financial transparency. A spokesperson for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, which scored 34, told a newspaper reporter she believed VOTF performed the study out of a sincere desire for financially responsible ministries. "I think we can all agree that transparency is important," she said.

## Death of Cardinal Bernard Law, face of clergy sexual abuse scandal, reopens old wounds, prompts reflection on progress of accountability and healing

Cardinal Bernard Law died Dec. 20, 2017, in Rome. Upon his death, VOTF released this statement: *"We pray for the family and friends of Cardinal Law, whose coverup of clergy sexual abuse was one of the greatest scandals of the Catholic Church. The child sex abuse and coverup, once revealed, pried open many other coverups and failures of the Catholic Church hierarchy. His passing also reminds us that so many of those damaged by the abuse and its coverup have yet to experience healing. We hope, particularly during this season of Advent, that we will see stronger support for that healing from the Church in the near future."*

Law resigned as archbishop of Boston in December 2002, about a year after *The Boston Globe* broke the story of clergy sexual abuse in his archdiocese and several months after VOTF started its movement.



*Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.*

After Law left Boston, Pope John Paul II rubbed salt into wounds from the clergy abuse scandal by appointing Law archpriest of the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, a papal basilica and one of the most important churches in Rome. Clergy abuse survivors and supporters saw the appointment as symbolic of everything that was wrong in how the Church has responded to the scandal.

A testament to his central role in the clergy abuse scandal, Law's death precipitated worldwide media coverage. *National Catholic Reporter* interviewed VOTF Executive Director Donna B. Doucette, and the subsequent story and editorial quoted lessons she said she learned from Law's death.

Catholics should learn three basic lessons from Law's legacy, Doucette said in the editorial, 'absolute power corrupts absolutely,' 'secrets destroy,' and for those interested in reforming Church structures, 'trust but verify.' Cardinal Law illustrated how systemic corruption had taken hold of the hierarchy. She added that the worldwide abuse scandal led to a "diminishing respect for Catholic clergy" and awoke Catholics to the "sickness" of clericalism. "You cannot place absolute faith and trust in any human," she said. "Betrayal can happen even among those we have looked to for guidance in our moral and spiritual lives."

Doucette pointed out that, in the 15 years since Law's resignation, U.S. bishops have advanced child protection standards, and Voice of the Faithful has called for action on sex abuse policies and financial transparency, but the response has not been uniform. Even now, she said, "Bishops are notoriously uncomfortable in talking about errors and sins in the hierarchy."

The editorial concluded with the present Archbishop of Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley's answer to a question during a press conference after Law's death. Asked whether he thought Law's soul would go to heaven, he said, "I hope that everyone goes to heaven. This is what the mission of the Church is, to work so that everyone will go to heaven, but I'm not here to sit in judgment on anyone."

VOTF prays clergy abuse victims will some day find the peace Cardinal Law denied them.



# Profiles in Faithfulness:

## *Jim & Jeannette Post, Lifetimes of Service*

*On occasion, Voice of the Faithful recognizes long-standing members in a Profile in Faithfulness. Here are Jim and Jeannette Post.*

Serving others is a bedrock Christian principle. Some people, like Jim and Jeannette Post, are living expressions of this principle. Both are Voice of the Faithful founders.

Both were raised in families that valued their Catholic heritage and faith, Jim in Buffalo and Jeannette in New York City. Both say their commitment to serve others was shaped by their families, their Catholic undergraduate education, and their professional education. From early in their careers, they saw firsthand the effects of using their skills to help others.

Jim, with business and law degrees, went on to hold the John F. Smith Professorship in Management at Boston University. Jeannette, a board-certified neurologist long affiliated with the Providence Veterans' Affairs Medical Center, served as Network Director for the Veterans' Affairs New England Health Care System.

aspects of the abuse tragedy, and became members of the strategic planning committee.

In time, Jim became spokesman, then president of VOTF, the "laity's movement," as Jim quotes Fr. Donald Cozzens, VOTF Priest of Integrity Award recipient. For the six years Jim was VOTF president, he spoke to audiences across the country about clergy sex abuse and the need for accountability, transparency, and healing.

Jim and Jeannette, working for a major university and the government, were no strangers to bureaucratic organizations, but they soon found themselves up

They also continue to maintain that the injustice done to victims of clergy sexual abuse demands the attention and



action of all Catholics. The psychological damage done to children and young people requires committed medical and social services. Church officials must recognize that this obligation will continue for decades to come. "That means VOTF needs to continue its advocacy for abuse survivors," Jim says. "It's a moral imperative."

---

*"The purpose of life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others." Albert Schweitzer*

---

They first met in Philadelphia and now have three children and eight grandchildren. By the time VOTF started they were well into their professional service careers—teacher and doctor.

Raised in strong Catholic families, both were appalled and wanted to act when the clergy sexual abuse scandal erupted in 2002. They found their niche when people gathered at St. John the Evangelist Church in Wellesley to talk and engage issues of faith and action. They spoke at that early meeting, volunteered to work on the medical and governance

against the Catholic Church, which has raised inflexibility and intransigence to a high art. Nothing, they say, prepared them for the ordeal they would face as they joined the effort to challenge the Church to address the issues the clergy sexual abuse scandal raised.

Today, 15 years after those formative meetings, they remain parishioners at St. John's, which continues, they say, to be a community of open, engaged members. Now retired, they stay active in a variety of professional and community organizations.

The need for lay leadership grows each day, they say. Young people in colleges and communities are responding to the call for service, and the Church needs to integrate these commitments into its own call for service.

Jim and Jeanette say that, for them, the clergy sexual abuse scandal became a spiritual journey of faith and action. "Our faith demanded that we act—do something," they say, "to right the wrong of abuse and coverup."

VOTF became a means to act in order to make a difference. The voice of the laity needed a focus and a direction. "The message resonates today," they say. "The Catholic Church needs the

*(Continued on Pg. 4)*

# Pope Francis' actions continue to contradict his words on clergy sexual abuse

Ever since Pope Francis' election five years ago. Voice of the Faithful has been hopeful that he would finally bring to the Church a zero tolerance for clergy sexual abuse and accountability for hierarchical acquiescence and coverup. As Boston College theologian Richard Gaillardetz has said, even though he is a fan of Francis, he is saddened by "his failure to see that compassion for clerical sexual abuse victims is necessary but not sufficient; there must also be a clear commitment to bring episcopal enablers to justice."



This inconsistency between the Pope's actions and the heartfelt tenor of his words has dimmed VOTF's hope for healing and renewal. Two recent events are particularly disconcerting.

First, in December 2017, the Pope allowed the three-year terms for members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors to expire. When he finally appointed new members two months later, some of the most experienced members were not reappointed. Cardinal Sean O'Malley still leads the Commission. The Commission started with great promise. In his document instituting it, the Pope said its specific task would be "to propose to me the most opportune initiatives for protecting minors and vulnerable adults, in order that we may do everything possible to ensure that crimes such as those which have occurred are no longer repeated in the Church."

Marie Collins, who resigned last March in frustration over Curial resistance, told *National Catholic Reporter*, "I'm shocked at the discarding of some of the most active and independent members of the commission. Some of those who have gone were really the most active and had the most experience of working in child protection and working directly with survivors."

Much of that advice appears to have been ignored, at least by the Curia if not the Pope. Collins had said that among the many stumbling blocks to the Commission's work that contributed were a lack of resources, inadequate structures around support staff, slowness of forward movement, and cultural

## Posts (Continued from Pg. 3)

voice of the laity to insist on reform. Without it, even well-intended efforts such as the Papal Commission (for the Protection of Minors) will fall short of changing the Church."

Thus, Jim and Jeannette sustain the call to service, urging all Catholics to become voices for accountability and reform in the Church.

resistance, and "the most significant problem has been reluctance of some members of the Vatican Curia to implement the recommendations of the Commission despite their approval by the Pope."

Second, in January, the Pope visited Chile and first wept with clergy abuse survivors and then disparaged them. He met with survivors and apologized for the "irreparable damage" they suffered. Then, on the plane returning to Rome, he labeled Chilean victims' allegations of coverup against Bishop Juan Barros Madrid *calumny*. The Pope said: "The day someone brings me proof against Bishop Barros, then I will talk. But there is not one single piece of evidence. It is all slander. Is that clear?"

Evidently, victims' testimony is not enough proof of coverup for the Pope, even though he must have possessed ample evidence in an eight-page letter written by abuse survivor Juan Carlos Cruz. In April, Collins hand-delivered the letter to Cardinal O'Malley, who has stated that he gave it to the Pope. The Vatican has since dispatched Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna to Chile to investigate clergy abuse allegations.

These and other events have shaken VOTF's confidence in the Pope's commitment and ability to address the clergy sexual abuse scandal. However, VOTF remains hopeful that the Church will ultimately recover. In the meantime, VOTF promises to continue to pray and work for healing, promote justice for abuse survivors, and advocate for transparency and accountability.

**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).**