

VOTF Lenten/Spring Actions
Offered to you by your Convocation Implementation Team (CIT)

Some Affiliates have full plates when it comes to VOTF actions while others are looking for new and creative ways to keep the VOTF presence alive in their communities. To help you focus your efforts during Lent, we offer you a menu of additional ways to hold the church accountable to the mission of Christ during the next few months.

1. Atonement.

Since Lent is a penitential season, we suggest a public action supporting atonement for the sin of our church not sufficiently responding to the sexual abuse crisis in general and to survivors in particular. Cardinal Claudio Hummes, prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, has urged us to pray before the Eucharist asking for forgiveness of the sin of clergy sexual abuse. We join our bishops in seeking this atonement.

Although all of us can benefit from prayer and repentance, since no one is totally free of sin, VOTF stands in solidarity with survivors and especially asks the hierarchy to do public penance for their collective role in abetting sexual abuse through the denial, delays, and obfuscation of too many bishops and religious leaders.

The action, therefore, is to gather as a community and acknowledge the sins that have been committed, pray for forgiveness and healing, and engage in the process of promoting healing and reconciliation. This could be done at an affiliate meeting or in front of chanceries or churches. This is our form of Eucharistic Adoration for the Body of Christ is in each of us.

2. Return to our Roots (an affiliate study experience)

Lent is also a time of introspection. Our church is over 2000 years old and it is important to periodically return to the founding vision of Christ. How did the early church gather and worship? How did they live together, make decisions, and help each other out. What was the lifestyle of early Christians? We don't suggest turning off the electricity and forgoing automobiles, but we can examine the spirit of the early Christian Communities and try to translate it into our times. VOTF offers study guides for such reflection. See www.votf.org

3. Shared Meditation on “This I Believe” (an affiliate reflective experience)

Fr. Bob Bowers of the Boston Paulist Center asks Catholics these three questions:

- Why do you go to church?
- Why do you stay?
- What would make you leave?

Perhaps you'd like to spend an affiliate meeting reflecting on these questions among yourselves. Work to move beyond complaints to what you and your VOTF affiliate can do to make a positive difference. Combine the exercise with the Lenten readings for the week. Examine the root causes of both devotion and disaffection with our church.

4. Send a Thank You Card

Some of you have already read Robert Blair Kaiser's book, *Cardinal Mahony*. It's a novel in which a fictional Cardinal Mahony is kidnapped by a band of liberation theologians who put

him on trial for not being a Christian. As a result, the fictional Cardinal Mahony has a conversion and returns to Los Angeles to spearhead a movement for a “People’s Church” in which there is true servant leadership and the people have a voice in the government of the church. Ultimately, Mahony is assassinated but only after he has birthed a renewed church.

Your affiliate may want to read the book together, or you may simply send a Thank You card to the real Cardinal Roger Mahony (Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 3424 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010-2202, info@la-archdiocese.org) expressing your admiration for the fictional Cardinal Mahony and your hope that he will live up to the Mahony legacy.

While considering a Lenten action, don’t forget that the Fall 2007 Action (*Surveying the US dioceses to assess their compliance with VOTF best practices in Protecting Our Children, Financial Accountability, and Church Governance*) is now an ongoing project. Check its current status on the VOTF web site.