

In the Vineyard August 5 2010

News from National

Ten Steps Toward Reforming the Catholic Church

It seems like every time you turn around these days, someone has another suggestion about how to reform the Catholic Church. So Voice of the Faithful has decided to put forward our best thinking on what the People of God need to do in order to 'keep the faith and change the Church.' In the wake of the devastating disclosures of this year, our list of "10 Steps" is a small start toward answering the question, "What happens now?" Think of it as a blueprint for change. We Catholics have never been known as quick to change, but perhaps that too is something that ought to...change.

Following is a list of 10 reforms proposed by Voice of the Faithful that would help heal our Church.

- 1. Protect children**
- 2. Support Survivors of abuse**
- 3. Identify Abusers**
- 4. Hold accountable all who facilitated abuse**
- 5. Conduct independent investigations of abuse**
- 6. Inquire into the causes of the crisis**
- 7. Empower the laity**
- 8. Develop inclusive governance structures**
- 9. Require financial transparency**
- 10. Host a representative global council of the Church**

1. Protect children: Adopt the U.S. norms for reporting abuse and the safe environment standards currently in place in some U.S. dioceses on a global scale, in every diocese of the Church and with independent auditing of compliance.

[Check out the USCCB](#) to make sure your parish is up to date.

Join Voice of the Faithful's team to get involved in this issue on a national level.

Join Voice of the Faithful's [Local Action team](#) to start monitoring safe environment programs in your parish.

2. Support Survivors of abuse: Stop fighting lawsuits; create independent national commissions staffed by the Catholic laity to arbitrate future claims; issue personal apologies from each bishop to individual survivors in each diocese; cease all lobbying efforts by the Church and its agents against statute of limitations reform in the U.S. and all other jurisdictions.

Check out the [Child Protection and Survivor Support team](#). They will be posting an advocacy guide for Statute of Limitations reform early Fall of 2010.

3. Identify Abusers: Identify all known abusers through national registries, while ensuring due process for any clergy and religious who are accused of abuse.

[Click here](#) to visit Bishop Accountability's database of publicly accused clergy.

Visit the [Child Protection and Survivor Support team](#) to find ways you can help protect children.

4. Hold accountable all who facilitated abuse: All religious authorities who transferred abusers without adequate supervision and separation from children should resign. Contact your [local authorities and diocese](#) to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their actions.

5. Conduct independent investigations of abuse: Commission independent professional studies to determine the presence and depth of the crisis in all countries.

In 2009, the [Irish government released its report](#) that detailed the horrific years of abuse in the Archdiocese of Dublin. It is a model for the examinations that should occur in every country.

6. Inquire into the causes of the crisis: Investigate the culture of clerical, male-dominated leadership that excludes the laity and women from positions of authority. Determine to what extent mandatory celibacy and other factors contributed to the moral failures of those in authority as well as of those who sometimes ignored obvious signs of abuse.

Review the [Causes and Context study](#) done by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Support the efforts of the Voice of the Faithful's [Universal Church Reform team](#) to bring about a greater role for women in the Church and study the need for mandated celibacy.

7. Empower the laity: Educate clergy and laity as to lay rights and responsibilities in the parish, in the diocese, and in the global governance of the Church, and codify those rights where they are not explicitly cited in canon law.

Visit [Voice of the Faithful's website](#) to review the rights of the laity as demonstrated by Canon law.

8. Develop inclusive governance structures: Give the laity a meaningful role in the selection of bishops; restore the requirement that bishops must come from the diocese they serve; refine the role of the "sense of the faithful" (sensus fidelium) and representative procedures; strengthen the independence of and lay participation in national episcopal conferences.

Voice of the Faithful's Universal Church Reform team has developed a consultative process that involves the participation of the local community in the selection of their next bishop and that encourages selection of the bishop from the local diocesan community. [Click here](#) to read the proposal.

9. Require financial transparency: Conduct annual independent audits of financial practices and financial statements at parish and diocesan levels; hold independent elections for parish pastoral councils and finance councils; apply unified reporting standards for all parishes and dioceses.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops distributed [guidelines for parish finance councils](#).

Join Voice of the Faithful's [Local Action team](#) who are working to establish best practices for parish finance councils and ensure that parishes across the U.S. are in compliance.

10. Host a representative global council of the Church: Establish a global Catholic Council of the entire People of God, with lay and ordained voting representatives, to be held within the decade, to adopt necessary reforms.

Theologian Hans Kung recently wrote an open letter to Catholic bishops worldwide asking for reform and accountability. [Click here](#) to read the text of that letter.

It is not too late to restore our Church to the vibrant messenger of the gospel it is meant to be—a Church where our children and grandchildren look forward to joining us on Sundays as we worship together the way generations of Catholics have done before, proud to call ourselves Catholic.

Is it Theology or Philosophy?

Submitted by Kevin Connors

The Vatican recently issued rules that include ordination of women among a list of grave crimes against the Church. The penalty for anyone who knowingly participates in a woman's ordination is automatic excommunication. If that isn't shocking by itself, consider that the penalty for participating in a woman's ordination is greater than the penalty that applies to clerics who are guilty of abusing children, or bishops who cover up clerical abuse of children by clerics.

So the baffling question that many Catholics are asking themselves is: why is the ordination of women such a terrible thing? On July 27, Archbishop Dolan of New York responded to this question

in his blog. He said that the ordination of women is a matter of internal doctrine for Catholics. Apparently, as Christ was a man, and women are different from men, women

can not be Christ-like. But does that mean that women are not made in the image and likeness of God? Is the question not a philosophical one rather than a theological one?

Mary Condren wrote a perceptive article in July 26 issue of The Irish Times that outlines the theological reasons why the Roman Catholic Church objects to women's ordination. We urge you to read the article and consider the arguments presented. And ask yourself, "are the arguments theological, or are they philosophical?" And, if they are philosophical, are they not open to debate among members of the faith community, and subject to change?

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2010/0726/1224275466148.html>

Letter to the Editor

Following is a letter from one of VOTF's members. She posted the letter as part of a conversation some members were having about the outrage they felt about the Pope's decision to include the ordination of women as a sin on par with the pedophilia practiced by some priests. I am sharing the letter with her permission.

Over the past few years, I have tried not to be a skeptic about the possibility of changing the church. After the latest salvo from the Vatican, I am trying not to be a cynic. On July 20, 2002, I was the only 8 ½ month pregnant women at VOTF's conference in Boston. I spent that day and a few more weeks after soul-searching the decision to baptize my daughter. We made our decision to baptize her despite the turmoil and loss of trust; we focused on our faith and parish, which brings so much joy and light into our lives.

Fast forward seven years... my daughter recently celebrated a beautiful First Communion day but as the European news and Vatican messaging hit our papers, we found many reasons to not attend Sunday mass (Denial + Avoidance!). As a volunteer teacher in our parish CCD program, I have become aware of how families interact (or don't) with our parish. Many of my students do not attend mass regularly and some don't even know our priest. If one definition of a leader is a person with followers, what happens when priests (bishops, popes, etc.) turn around and find no one there?

Perhaps we should look to our youngest members to find our path forward?

For starters, I would like church officials to provide an explanation of the "grave sin" of ordination of women that will make sense to the vibrant, intelligent third grade girls I will see this September. In 2002, I thought the church was so shamed and shocked that a major change was unavoidable. I reasoned that by the time my daughters were of

confirmation age, the church would be closer to genuinely, consistently living the Gospel because of the crisis of abuse and cover-up.

Will this church ever be worthy of my children's profession of faith? A far graver sin than 'ordination of women' is a mother giving her children to an organization that would devalue or abuse them. I took a leap of faith in 2002, but eight years on, I fear I am guilty of not acting in the best interests of my daughters... but to whom should I confess? I truly hope this ongoing dialogue provides seeds for lasting change. I applaud the writing, organizing, and praying everyone in VOTF does so passionately. I am blessed my faith hasn't wavered but as I grow more doubtful about keeping with this church, I thank you all for giving me a reason to hang on. Perhaps instead of having women stop donating or attending services in October as one writer suggested, parish donations could be used to send parishioners to Rome to ask (again and again) just what it is about women that the church can't abide. At least this way, people might enjoy the art and architecture even if their words fell on mere stone.

Peace,
J. Lambkin

Calendar Section

Save the date, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2010

Listen to "Bless me Father for I have sinned!"

Priestly sexual abuse in the Diocese of Bridgeport

A dramatic presentation of court documents.

Also FR. TOM DOYLE, O.P., the canon lawyer who alerted the American bishops to the problem of priestly sexual abuse in the 1980s

Norwalk Concert Hall, Norwalk City Hall, East Avenue, Norwalk

12:30-4:30 p.m.

The Responsibilities and Rights of the Laity

There has been much conversation among Catholics lately about whether or not we have the "right" to have our voices heard, and if, as some believe, it is our responsibility to speak out against injustice, even if it is within our own Church. Voice of Renewal/Lay Education, a VOTF working group, has posted a document that outlines the responsibilities and rights of the laity.

"According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which [the laity] possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons."
(Canon 212 §3)

To learn more, go to http://votf.org/Voice_of_Renewal/Rights_of_the_Laity.pdf

Site Seeing

A plan is in the works to form an independent association of Irish priests. The aim is to make hierarchy more accountable.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/republic-of-ireland/union-of-6500-irish-priests-to-hold-hierarchy-to-account-14891589.html##ixzz0v7ZB59qC>

Are women religious being asked to return to a 19th century way of life?

<http://ncronline.org/news/women-religious/speak-our-women-religious>

Misogyny as Church Policy

<http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/99608044.html>

Members in the News

Sandra Stilling Seehausen's letter in the Daily Herald

Cardinal Held Accountable

Well, Cardinal George, once again the person you placed at St. Agatha's and failed to remove even when more allegations were made against Daniel McCormack is in the news. You, the review board, Jimmy Lago, and all the others who were aware that Daniel McCormack had a history of abuse should have your names right up there in the headlines, for you are more guilty than McCormack even for endangering children with sexual abuse.

How do you sleep at night? You have been derelict in your duties. You have broken the law of the state and God's laws. Thank God Daniel McCormack is still locked up, or he would be abusing again.

Have you viewed the Virtus training lately, which educates attendees about sex abusers, including that they cannot usually recover from their illness, certainly not if they are not even remorseful, as Daniel McCormack is?

What seems to be your problem in not doing what experts tell us is best way to protect children? Why do you seemingly choose to be the problem rather than part of the solution? You, with all your power are a deplorable "leader." You could resign; that would be the right thing to do. Or you could help turn a new leaf and show you are truly sorry for the harm caused to victims, their families, and, indeed, the whole church, by having all fellow bishop enablers to also resign, such as many did in Ireland and some in other parts of the world.

You could also direct the Catholic Conference lawyers to stop fighting any and all legislation that would strengthen our laws against perpetrators and enablers, including the church officials, staff, as well as those in authority in other professions. Instead, as far as I know, Barbara Westrick is the only one who lost her job and that for doing the right thing.

I pray every day that your heart will be transformed by the Holy Spirit.
Sandra Stilling Seehausen

Book Corner

Looking for something good to read? How about *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: Spirituality for Real Life* by James Martin, S.J. published by Harper Collins (Mar. 2010).

Following is a review by Gaile M. Polhaus Ph.D.

If you have read any of James Martin's books you already know that his writing style is conversational and interesting. The fourteen chapters of his latest book are no exception. Having just completed teaching a course on spirituality I only regret that I did not have this book on the required reading list. And it is available in three formats: hardback, paperback, and e-book. Since you are reading this on your computer I suggest you go to Amazon (through VOTF of course) and order it. (By going to Amazon through VOTF, VOTF gets a portion of the purchase price.)

The important thing about spirituality is the link between prayer and care. Chapter ten sums this up nicely in a way that is helpful for all, both single and married. Chapter thirteen exhorts you to "Be who you is." Something I, at least, need to be reminded of occasionally. But the chapter I found most helpful was chapter four "Beautiful Yesterdays" in which Martin gives a wonderful teaching on the examination of conscience. He warns against "good old Catholic Guilt" and writes, with many examples, of ways to do the examen and what can be gained.

This book is a keeper and I will surely put it on my next book order for class.