

In the Vineyard, January 14, 2010

News from National

Help the Earthquake Victims in Haiti

Catholic Relief Services has set up a website for donations to the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. If you are interested in helping out, please follow the link https://secure.crs.org/site/Donation2?df_id=3181&3181.donation=form1

VOTF 2010 Election Campaign Begins

The VOTF Election Committee congratulates the nominees for national office in the 2010 National Officer Elections: Dan Bartley, Gaile Pohlhaus, Janet Hauter, Nick Mazza, Anne Southwood and Kevin Connors.

Our Election Campaign begins today and will end on Monday, February 8, 2010, when the voting period opens. Voting will be open for two weeks, ending at 12 noon on Monday, February 22, 2010. The results of the election will be announced on Wednesday, February 24, 2010, and the newly elected officers will take office on March 15, 2010.

During the campaign, we have arranged for several ways for the VOTF members to get to know the candidates and discuss the issues:

VOTF 2010 Election Campaign Begins

- The candidates' statements are posted on the VOTF website.
- The “Candidates Forum” on the website provides the opportunity to pose a question to a candidate (see further description of how this works by clicking here).
- Every Wednesday, registered voters will receive a campaign “bulletin” from the candidates in rotation.
- During the first week of February, live interviews with the candidates will be posted on the VOTF website.

The Election Committee looks forward to a campaign time of lively discussion and charitable disposition, where we will model, as an organization, the kind of procedures that we would want to see in other institutions, notably the Church. Any questions about the process can be sent to Sheila Peiffer at sheila_peiffer@yahoo.com.

Thank you!

The VOTF National Elections Committee for 2010:

Ed Gleason, Frances Hofmeister, Mark Mullaney, Sheila Peiffer and Brad Pritts

News from the Affiliates

John Jay College Researcher Margaret Smith Presents Interim “Causes & Context” Report at January 4 New York VOTF Meeting

Submitted by Francis X. Piderit

On Monday, January 4th, Professor Margaret Smith from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice was the featured speaker at the monthly meeting of the New York VOTF affiliate. Smith, the mid-day speaker at the national VOTF convention held on Long Island at the end of October, gave an expanded interim report on the “Causes & Context” study now underway as she spoke before a New York audience of 60, which included representatives from VOTF affiliates in Westchester, Brooklyn and Queens, as well as interested members of the New York survivor community.

The presentation included more detailed data showing the distribution of incidence of abuse between 1950 and 2007 than was presented to the VOTF national convention audience. The graph of the total number of reported incidents shows a sharp increase in the 1960s, peaking in the 1970s, and then declining sharply in the 1980s and 1990s. A comparison between data from the John Jay historical study and data gathered since 2002 by CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) shows a consistent longitudinal pattern of incidents over the years. The pattern does not change – either for the abuse incidents reported before 2002, or the abuse incidents reported in each year from 2002 to 2007. (*continued*)

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In presenting the data, Smith stressed the following points:

The incidence of abuse of youth in the Catholic Church between 1950 and 2002 is consistent with the pattern of social change in the USA.

The study of the rate of change in incidence shows that it is consistent with that of other behavioral indicators and overall social forces (ideas, attitudes, trends, media images, etc) prevalent in this period of vast change in the U.S. The study data from surveys and archival sources illustrates how those social forces were represented in seminaries, parishes, treatment facilities and in the lives of individual priests.

Concerning the Causes & Context research now in progress, Smith described the need to understand the community or parish context of the abuse and the circumstances in which it took place, including such questions as:

- How was the abuse initiated and able to persist?
- What were the specific time-linked factors of parish life?
- Were concerns expressed in Catholic parishes during this period 1970 – 1985?

The focus of the research on community or parishes is on the “context” and historical explanation of abuse, not on the impact of victimization. The research includes surveys of identified adult survivors of abuse by priests and of adult Catholics active in parish life in the 1970s – 1980s, covering memories of abuse / knowledge of abuse, circumstances of initiation, knowledge by other adults, and disclosure and response.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Professor Smith distributed questionnaires to audience members, and invited everyone to respond to the questions about parish life in the 1970s – 1980s. The research team intends to distribute a version of the questionnaire broadly in Catholic communities as they work to understand the personal life situation of the victims and the situational contexts of initiation. Once a final questionnaire becomes available, Voice of the Faithful will distribute it to the national membership.

A spirited discussion sprang up during the Q&A session, as many survivors in attendance questioned the validity of data provided by U.S. dioceses. Professor Smith responded to their concerns by noting that while the data set made available by the U.S. bishops was self-reported, it was the only public data available from any source. Fr. Tom Doyle weighed in on the same issue in the days following the meeting by circulating via email extended reflections on the benefits and limitations of the Causes & Context study.

Background on the Causes & Context Research Project

In June of 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created a Charter that aimed to understand and address the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States. Article 9 of the Charter states in part: “To understand the problem more fully and to enhance the effectiveness of our future response, the National Review Board will also commission a descriptive study, with the full cooperation of our dioceses/eparchies, of the nature and scope of the problem within the Catholic Church in the United States, including such data as statistics on perpetrators and victims.” The Office of Child and Youth Protection and the National Review Board, two entities formed as a result of the Charter, commissioned researchers at John Jay College of Criminal Justice to conduct the first descriptive study, covering the period 1950-2002. The John Jay College Research Team – criminologists, forensic psychologists, research consultants and research assistants – released a full report on the nature and scope of the sexual abuse crisis in February 2004.

In the two years that followed, the research team did further analysis, and a supplementary report was released in 2006. Although the original study was almost

entirely descriptive, the aim of the supplementary analysis was to address key issues in more detail, including the estimation of the overall problem of abuse in the Church, patterns of abuse, duration of abusive behavior, priests with one allegation and priests with multiple allegations, subgroups of priests with allegations of abuse, and the institutional response to the abuse problem.

The USCCB has also commissioned John Jay College researchers to conduct the second study noted in the Charter, an in-depth account of the causes and context of the abuse crisis. The bishops provided \$1 million for that research, and that sum has been more than matched by private donations and grants from foundations and federal agencies. Work on the “Causes & Context” Study is ongoing and should be complete in 2010.

Rigert’s New Database Available at Bishop-Accountability.org

Joe Rigert, whose book, *An Irish Tragedy: How Sex Abuse by Irish Priests Helped Cripple the Catholic Church.*” was reviewed in an earlier issue of *In the Vineyard*, wrote in to alert VOTF members of a first-ever database on more than 60 priests from Ireland accused of sex abuse in the United States.

For more information [Link here](#)

Rigert’s New Database Available at Bishop-Accountability.org

Continued

The detailed database, available on Bishop-Accountability.org, was prepared by Joe Rigert from information gathered for his book. In announcing the availability of the database, Bishop-Accountability said the “outsourcing” of the Irish priests showed the American connection with the continuing scandal in Ireland, where four bishops have resigned over recent revelations that they covered up abuses in the Dublin archdiocese. In his book, Rigert offers compelling evidence that cultural and clergy celibacy in Ireland was a major cause of widespread sexual abuse, much of which was carried to America. One-third of the priests publicly accused of sex abuse in this country came from Ireland or were of Irish descent. One priest, Oliver O’Grady, sexually abused up to 50 boys and girls in America.

Guest Commentary

Reflections from 25 Years of Experience At the Start of the New Year

Submitted by Thomas Doyle, J.C.D.

It is the beginning of 2010. Back many years ago when a new year would dawn, I remember when I would predict that this would be the last year of the Catholic sex abuse scandal. This year the Church will change. This year the bishops will shift gears and focus on the thousands of victims. This year the lawsuits will end because they will no longer be necessary.

Some would call that wishful thinking. Others may believe it to be delusion. In either case it was obviously magical thinking based on unreality. (*continued*)

Reflections from 25 Years of Experience At the Start of the New Year

Submitted by Thomas Doyle, J.C.D.

Continued

None of my past hopes have come true and I doubt they ever will. The contrast between the reality of what has happened and continues to happen to victims at the direction of bishops, and what the bishops themselves claim they have accomplished is a chasm the depth of which defies the imagination.

As this new year of pragmatic action starts I'd like to share some random reflections from my experiences with the Catholic Church and clergy sex abuse. I have been closely involved on all levels since 1984. As many know, I did extensive research on the Church's historical response for the book I co-authored. I have been involved in thousands of clergy abuse cases as a consultant, expert witness and/or pastoral minister in the U.S., Canada, Ireland (North and South), the U.K., Mexico, Italy, Malta and Israel.

In all of the research I have done and in every case I have seen or been involved in, the initial response of the official church whether it is on the part of the pope, a bishop or religious superior has been to hide the facts from the public. The second response has been just as consistent. The bishops have done everything they could to prevent the case from public exposure. If it does, then they do all they can to manipulate the truth so as to protect the image of the hierarchy first and the institutional church second.

In all of my research and in each and every case I have studied on any level, I have found something profoundly disturbing. I have not seen evidence of one single instance where the bishop or religious superior's first response was to even ask about the condition of the victim much less reach out to the victim. I know there have been exceptions, but they have been very few and far between.

In every case where the bishop has met with victims, and this has only happened since 2002 with only a very few instances known to me between 1984 and 2002, the meeting has not been a spontaneous gesture by the bishop. In every case known to me the meeting took place because the bishop was mandated to do so in the terms of the settlement.

Throughout the U.S. there have been many cases brought to court where there has been little doubt on the part of either side that the sexual abuse actually happened but where the case was thrown out because it was outside the Statute of Limitations. I know of no such case where the bishop has, in spite of the lack of a civil process, offered to make monetary reparations to the victim. Uniformly...the victims are ignored. The bishops and their lawyers think they have won. They have protected their precious church's money. But have they won...really? Hardly! They continue to reinforce the image of the "church" as a callous and insensitive business enterprise.

Since 1984 thousands of priests, deacons and brothers have been exposed. Many have ended up in jail or prison. Since 2002 the bishops have been scrambling to get rid of every cleric who has ever abused...but not because of a sense of Justice. Rather, getting rid of them creates the illusion that they are doing something. Getting rid of them reduces the liability!

Over two-thirds of the U.S. bishops have knowingly covered sexual abusers and in so doing have directly caused the ruination of the souls and often the bodies of countless more victims. The almighty Vatican, for all its carefully tooled statements of concern has not called a single bishop to accountability. A few have resigned but so what? They have committed crimes with impunity. Why? Because they are bishops and in the magical thinking of the papacy, bishops are above hard-ball justice. Some bishops have even been sexual abusers themselves. None have been defrocked.

I have seen consistent, hard evidence of a radical disconnect between the mandate of Christ in the Gospel in reference to such matters, and the actual actions of the bishops and the popes. In short, the popes (JP2 and Benedict XVI) and the bishops have not acted as Christians but rather as agnostic, self-serving businessmen.

VOTF Members Speak Out

Responding to an article in Long Island's Newsday newspaper, VOTF's Kevin Connors says:

By failing to distinguish between an institution and its leadership, spokesman for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, Sean Dolan, misses the point when he accuses "dissident groups," such as Voice of the Faithful of trying to harm the Church (Church watchdog revitalized, Jan.3, 2010). Dissident groups are not to blame for the critical shortage of priests; for the epidemic of church closings; or for the inexcusable failure to acknowledge the equality of women; or the practice of making decisions behind closed doors and announcing them as final and affirmed; or for the billions of dollars squandered in attempts to hide, and then explain away the indefensible treatment of defenseless children. Church leaders are responsible. And like their failed counterparts in industry who mindlessly squandered their organizations' resources to bring near collapse to the world economy, it is the bishops, and the rules governing the way their institution is operated that need to be changed, not the faith. (*continued*)

Connor's Response to Newsday

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Most Americans understand this. Consider what happened to the leaders of Morgan Stanley, AIG, General Motors, and Chrysler, to name a few, and the reform legislation working its way through congress. The same thing needs to happen in the Catholic Church, and that is what reform groups (which those in power always try to label as dissident) like VOTF are striving to accomplish, nothing more.

Kevin Connors
Founding Member of Long Island VOTF, and
Treasurer of National VOTF

A Special Offer for VOTF Members from New Catholic Times!*

New Catholic Times is Canada's independent online magazine with an editorial commitment to justice and an ecumenical and interfaith focus. Every two weeks, New Catholic Times brings articles about local and global church issues, North American and world issues, book and film reviews, and more to your computer screen. A 12 month subscription is now available to VOTF members for only \$10. For more information, and to check out some past articles, click on www.newcatholictimes.com and log in using votf@cogeco.ca and password votf. If you would like to subscribe, then click the Voice of the Faithful subscription button near the left bottom of the screen.

*VOTF will receive a referral fee for each subscription, so consider sending a subscription to a friend or colleague.

Site Seeing

For a comprehensive look at the investigation of U.S. women religious...
<http://www.uscatholic.org/womenreligious>

Several Irish media outlets reported on VOTF Ireland's statement on Irish cover-up, here are just a few....

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2010/0104/1224261600448.html>

<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Voice-of-the-Faithful-targets-new-Irish-Catholic-bishop-over-child-sex-abuse--80465207.html>

Calendar

James R. Kelly Ph.D. will present "Radical but not Utopian: How the Peace and Pro-Life Movements Need Each Other" at Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport's first meeting of the New Year to be held on Thursday, January 14th, at 7:30 p.m., at the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk.

Dr. Kelly received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1969 and has taught at Fordham University since 1971. His areas of research have been in the sociology of religion with special emphasis on Catholicism. A full professor of Sociology at Fordham since 1981, he has served as chairman of the Department of Sociology, and was elected President of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in 1997. He has been a member of the New York Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue since 1975, and served as the first executive secretary of the Cardinal Bernadin Common Ground Catholic Initiative. In addition to his publications in professional journals such as *The Review of Religious Research* and *Sociology of Religion*, he has contributed to the publications *Commonweal*, *Christianity Today* and *America* where his article "Why the Pro-life Movement Should Return to Its

Roots” appeared, February 16, 2009. He also appeared in a 2007 documentary, “Beyond the Politics of Life and Choice”.

All are welcome to attend. For more information about VOTF and for directions to the meeting, please visit our website, www.votfbpt.org.

The Church: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

VOTF-NJ presents a Special Program: Our Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

Three speakers will help us understand how our institutional structures have changed from the early days of the church, the appalling situations we face today, and where hope lies for the future.

Saturday, February 6, 2010, 10:00 AM

9:30 AM Coffee

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

100 Harter Road

Morristown, NJ

Bridgeport Program Feb. 6, 2009, 10 a.m.

Yesterday:

Joseph F. O'Callaghan, historian, author of *Electing our Bishops: How the Catholic Church Should Choose its Leaders* and professor emeritus at Fordham University, will describe the days when bishops were chosen from their communities by priests and laity. They knew their people and remained in their diocese, usually until their death. How did we go so far off track? What's wrong with a system of papal appointments? Can we return to the climate of transparency, accountability and simplicity known in those days?

Today:

Are we facing an institutional train wreck? Joe Lynaugh, who has seen the good, the bad and the ugly across many types of institutions in a succession of high level positions in the Archdiocese of New York, NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation, New York Life Insurance Company and entrepreneurial start-ups, will present an overview of today's church leadership, not only in the United States but worldwide. What do the Dublin Report and the ongoing horrifying news from Chicago, California, Bridgeport, Connecticut, and other sites of clergy sexual abuse and ongoing cover-up schemes tell us about our current bishops? What has to change? Can anything change?

Tomorrow:

Linda Pinto will talk about the exciting American Catholic Council, which will take place in Detroit on Pentecost in June, 2011. Why such a Council? How can we participate now? What will happen at the Council? What can such a Council of laity really accomplish?

Linda, a former Franciscan nun, is married to Ralph, a priest of the Diocese of Newark, and serves on the Board of CORPUS, the National Association for an Inclusive Priesthood. She works in senior housing and healthcare.

There will be plenty of time for your questions. Come share a morning with us. Coffee, bagels, and stimulating conversation!

The Enduring Effects of Sexual Abuse by Clergy

Glastonbury Abbey, in conjunction with the Scituate Affiliate of Voice of the Faithful, is hosting a talk entitled, "The Enduring Psychological and Spiritual Effects of Clergy-Perpetrated Sexual Abuse". The event will take place at the Abbey Center at the Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham on Tuesday evening, January 26th at 7:15 pm.

The presenters of the talk are Barbara Thorp, LICSW, and Robert McMackin, EdD. Barbara Thorp is the Director of the Boston Archdiocesan Office for Pastoral Support and Outreach (OPSO). Robert McMackin is a Psychologist Consultant for OPSO and co-editor of the book *Understanding the Impact of Clergy Sexual Abuse*, Routledge Press, 2009. OPSO, established in 2002, assists those who have been sexually abused by a priest, deacon, or other church personnel of the Archdiocese of Boston. OPSO's mission is to provide assistance, pastoral/spiritual care, support, counseling referrals, and other resources to survivors, family members of survivors, and parishes. Barbara, Cardinal Séan O'Malley, and survivors of clergy sexual abuse met with Pope Benedict in Washington DC in April 2008.

On January 26th, Barbara and Bob will discuss the long-term effects of sexual abuse by clergy and the work of OPSO to help survivors. Admission is free. Donations are appreciated to help defray costs. All are welcome.

The USA premiere of Maeve Murphy's award winning film (best feature, London Independent Film Festival), *Beyond the Fire*, will be held on Sunday evening, January 24, 2010, at 9:00 P.M. at the DEDHAM COMMUNITY THEATER, HIGH STREET, downtown DEDHAM, just off Route 1 (Providence Highway).

Following the 77 minute film, a panel of clergy abuse experts/survivors and movie principals will share in a question and answer period. A donation of \$10.00 would be appreciated but MUST not prevent anyone from attending the premiere. All proceeds will benefit the work of Road to Recovery, a non-profit organization founded and directed by Fathers Ken Lasch and Bob Hoatson that assists clergy abuse survivors with their recoveries. Members of the panel will be:

Moderator: Rev. Robert M. Hoatson, Ph.D.
(Consultant to the movie, clergy abuse survivor, and founder/president of Road to Recovery, Inc.)

PANELISTS: Maeve Murphy

(Writer, producer, and director who hails from Belfast but lives now in London)

ATTORNEY Mitchell Garabedian

(Noted clergy sexual abuse attorney who has over 700 clergy abuse cases)

Alexa McPherson

(Clergy abuse survivor who was abused thousands of times by her priest abuser)

Dr. Ann Hagan Webb

(Clergy abuse survivor and psychotherapist)

Phil Saviano

(One of the first to report his clergy sexual abuse and founder of New England survivor groups)

Cara Seymour

(Lead actress in the movie and currently starring in the acclaimed film, "An Education")