

In the Vineyard July 22, 2010

## News from National

### Vatican Revision Falls Far Short

VOTF released a statement criticizing the Vatican's recent revision of church law. "In light of the crisis facing our Church, these changes are timid, and mean little unless accompanied by action," said VOTF President Dan Bartley. Beyond the issue of revisions, Voice of the Faithful finds it inconceivable that in the same announcement the Vatican effectively ranked participation in the "attempted" ordination of women as a crime comparable to child rape.

To read the entire statement by VOTF

<http://votf.org/vaticanrulesreaction>

Check Out VOTF's New Prophetic Voices web page at

<http://votf.org/propheticvoices>. It is a compilation of statements showing that we have come to a turning point within our church and that others are now taking up the call for transparency and accountability. We encourage you to read them and pass them around. We will continue to post such voices as they arise. If you have read or heard something you think is particularly prophetic, please send it to [office@votf.org](mailto:office@votf.org) and we will try to include it.

### Some Progress in SOL Reform

The State of Florida has passed legislation to repeal all previous SOL restrictions. At this point, any child under the age of 16 has a lifetime to bring any action relating to sexual battery in criminal or civil court.

This is not 'windows legislation' but is a step forward in the protection of children and may be a first in the nation. It still allows for claims on any existing cases for which SOL has not expired as of July 1, 2010 and any claims going forward.

The Florida Catholic Conference opposed the bill to repeal the present SOL restrictions. In the end however, the vote was unanimous in both the house and senate and was gladly signed by the governor.

Much of this successful reform was due to continual effort over several years of one West Palm Beach lawyer, Michael Dolce; the support of various advocacy groups such as FL Council Against Sexual Violence; VOTF and others but also from strong legislative leadership and the realization that this was the right thing to do.

## Members in the News

VOTF's Pat Gomez was interviewed on Univision; Boston's Spanish speaking news station. She spoke on the new Vatican rules.

<http://www.wunitv.com/>

(click on the story "Vatican Abuso de menores")

### News from Ireland

Bryan Maguire, from VOTF Ireland wrote the following letter to the Bishops who are conducting the visitation to Ireland to examine how and why the abuse scandal was so far reaching. Among other things, Bryan asks the Bishops to examine the culture of secrecy that surrounds the priesthood and asks for a more equal relationship between the laity and clerics. He also asks if perhaps the provisions of Canon Law should be changed to more justly reflect the needs of the church and its people.

BEGIN LINK

July 12, 2007

To:

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor  
Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley OFM Cap  
Archbishop Thomas Christopher Collins  
Archbishop Terrence Thomas Prendergast  
Archbishop Timothy Dolan  
Reverend Joseph Tobin, CSsR  
Gero McLaughlin SJ  
Sharon Holland IHM  
Mairin McDonagh RJM

Dear Apostolic Visitors,

Welcome to Ireland. Voice of the Faithful in Ireland, along with many of our fellow Catholics, looks forward to renewal in the life of the People of God in our country following the appalling scandal of the abuse of children by priests and religious and the cover-up of that abuse by their superiors. We join with Pope Benedict in hoping that your work can contribute to this renewal. VOTF has already publicly welcomed the announcement of the visitation (see attached press release). In this letter we offer some suggestions for your *Instrumentum Laboris*, which we understand is still in preparation. We have suggestions for the substantive questions which the visitation should address and for the procedures to be followed in conducting the visitation.

Voice of the Faithful is a group of Catholics, including lay people, priests and religious, who have come together in response to the revelations of clerical abuse and cover-up with the goals of supporting survivors of abuse, supporting priests of integrity and shaping structural change within the Catholic Church. Our

mission is to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. The movement was founded in Boston ([www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org)) and in recent years has grown in Ireland ([www.votfi.com](http://www.votfi.com)) to a membership of about 160 throughout the country.

VOTFI is a representative group, with articulate members from across the whole of Ireland, including its known and anonymous survivors. We have taken part in conversations with Irish bishops and their representatives as well as engaging in media discussions on the scandal. We are in communication with other groups who share our aims, both in Ireland and internationally. Individual members are active in a variety of initiatives to support survivors and to raise consciousness about the needs of survivors and the urgency of reform in the Irish Church.

The announcement of your appointment indicated that your task will be to explore more deeply questions concerning the handling of cases of abuse and the assistance owed to the victims, and to monitor the effectiveness of and seek possible improvements to the current procedures for preventing abuse, taking the existing norms as references. In the case of some dioceses notably Ferns and Dublin and in the cases of the residential institutions run by religious, we have already had extensive explorations of the handling of cases in the published judicial reports. No doubt the exploration will take these as their starting point in exploring more deeply.

While noting that this visitation is for Ireland, we urge you to keep in mind that the problems to be investigated are widespread across the Church. Please ensure that global factors as well as local circumstances are addressed in the visitation.

Pope Benedict's letter already indicated certain factors which he feels are relevant, namely problems in the selection and formation of priests and religious, a social privileging of clergy and a misplaced concern for their reputation. These are identifying characteristics of the phenomenon known as clericalism. We would urge that the examination of this phenomenon be a major focus of the visitation.

Combating clericalism will require an enhanced understanding of the role of the laity in the Church. We urge the visitation to examine why lay participation in the life of the Church in Ireland has not expanded in the ways promised in the Second Vatican Council and whether this underdeveloped lay responsibility contributed to the abuse scandal. You will no doubt be aware that one of the Dublin Archbishops strongly criticized in the Murphy report, John Charles McQuaid, told the people of Ireland in 1965, on his return from the Council, that nothing that had happened there should disturb the 'tranquility' of the Irish church. Knowing now that this 'tranquility' was an illusion, we know also that this dismissive attitude towards the Council was a key enabler of the national tragedy revealed starkly last year.

Clerical sexual exploitation is not limited to children. The abuse of clerical position and privilege in the engaging in exploitative sexual relationships with adult women and men by some priests is the product of a dysfunctional nexus of power and sexuality related to that which leads to the abuse of children. The visitation should consider this issue.

There is a need to examine the connection between structural reform in the Church and child safety. As John Morgan, the Chair of the National Board for Safeguarding Children wrote in the 2009 annual report, it is necessary to “examine what Church structures brought about the situation that has unfolded before us and how such structures must be changed.”

In the visitation's work with religious communities, attention should be paid not just to the Ryan report but also to the McCoy investigation into the Brothers of Charity, which deals with the victimization of people with disability. This is just one example of a case in which religious orders exploited their international character to transfer abusers outside the jurisdiction to avoid censure or the civil law. Diocesan priests too were transferred overseas and the visitation should examine whether there are sufficient ecclesiastical safeguards in place globally to prevent this occurring in the future and whether efforts have been made to follow-up with their victims in other countries, including mission territories.

In some cases problems have been found relating to canon law and its implementation. The visitation should examine whether the provisions of canon law should be changed. In particular the canonical concept of secrecy has particularly unfortunate resonances for survivors of sexual abuse, which is a crime largely predicated on secrecy. As it stands at present, canon law also permits the clericalist denial of regular opportunities for clergy and lay people to meet in dialogue and to develop a truly co-responsible relationship, based upon the common priesthood of all of the faithful.

The adequacy of the provisions made for redress to survivors should be a focus of the visitation. This includes support to meet the material, psychological and spiritual needs occasioned by their abuse. How have needs been assessed? What evaluation if any has been made of services provided? This is a matter of justice and is one of the ways in which the Church can become a sign of the Gospel message in Ireland.

The Church in Ireland has much work to do and will require strong leadership to do so, including from the bishops. Some bishops have already offered their resignations because of their collusion in the mishandling of clerical child abuse. The visitation should examine the qualities required for leadership of the renewal and whether some existing bishops might be disqualified because of their past. The criteria and procedures for selecting new bishops should be examined. Given that all of those Irish bishops who have failed in their shepherding duty in

recent decades were appointed by Rome, you will surely need to consider this Roman dimension of the Irish problem. Do the criteria for selection of bishops give due priority to strength of moral character and pastoral concern, qualities so clearly lacking in bishops who endangered children?

The Pope's letter refers to the missionary activity of the Irish Church and you yourselves have roots in the Irish diaspora. Unfortunately the evils of clerical abuse and its concealment seem to have travelled abroad alongside the precious gift of the Faith, and the lessons learned painfully by the Irish church will surely be relevant to other countries as well. It is also more than likely that local failures were compounded by aspects of universal church governance, and the visitation should not shy away from identifying these factors where they exist. Doing so will help the Church and protect children worldwide. The concealment of clerical abuse by bishops, acknowledged by the bishops of Ireland as a 'culture' of 'cover up' in their statement of December 9th, 2009, is a phenomenon now known to have been widespread throughout the church. Your visitation must surely consider the strong possibility that the concentration of authority in the hands of a single individual—the bishop—involves bishops too often in conflicts of interest that they can only resolve in ways that bring disgrace in the long run. A failure to even consider this possibility will lead many in Ireland to conclude that inherited structures of church governance are prized by the magisterium above the safety of children and the health of the church.

Priestly formation is one of the strands of the visitation and it is vital that this aspect of the life of the Church learn from the scandal. Lay people have a lively interest in this topic and should be afforded opportunities to participate in this aspect of the visitation.

The tragic harm inflicted on children through clerical sexual abuse and cover-up has damaged the capacity of the Irish Church to witness to young people. The visitation should explore how the young people of Ireland can be re-engaged in the life of the Church given the recent scandals.

As far as the procedures for the visitation are concerned the first step is that the Instrumentum Laboris should itself be the subject of widespread public consultation and an iterative drafting process. Lay input such as this present letter should be encouraged. Special efforts should be made to obtain input from survivors of clerical abuse. Please note that formal structures for lay participation in the Church, such as pastoral councils, are very poorly developed in Ireland and those that exist may not be very representative of or well known by the faithful.

The visitation itself should engage with lay people, not merely as providers of evidence, but as assistants in the collection and evaluation of the evidence. Direct participation by survivors of clerical abuse should be a feature of the visitation. The engagement with survivors will need to be handled carefully and

should be facilitated by survivor advocacy groups and professionals.

The process of visitation should be transparent as regards the methods used to gather evidence and engage in consultation, the funding and other resourcing of the visitation, and the disclosure of any conflicts of interests that arise for the visitors themselves.

The findings and recommendations of the visitation should be published widely on completion. Secrecy is at the heart of abuse. The offences that occasioned this visitation will be compounded and the renewal of the faith compromised if the truth is not told in the light of day.

Voice of the Faithful prays that you will be given the grace to trust the Holy Spirit and to include the People of God, abuse survivors, lay and religious men and women in the difficult task of renewal of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Guímis rath Dé ar an obair.

Signed,  
Bryan Maguire  
on behalf of Voice of the Faithful Ireland

cc:  
Cardinal Sean Brady  
Archbishop Diarmuid Martin  
Archbishop Dermot Clifford  
Archbishop Michael Neary  
Archbishop Giuseppe Leanza

END LINK

A Sad Note from the News: John Hynes

*The Boston Globe* took note recently when the first chair of the regional Boston Area Council VOTF died suddenly, calling him a "crusader in Catholic laity organization" in their profile

[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/obituaries/articles/2010/07/18/john\\_hynes\\_66\\_crusader\\_in\\_catholic\\_laity\\_organization/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/obituaries/articles/2010/07/18/john_hynes_66_crusader_in_catholic_laity_organization/)

News from *Voices in Action* Teams

Bill Casey from our Child Protection/Survivor Support team passes along this note about one small Massachusetts-based survivor support group that is working to help boys in Haiti who reported sexual abuse at the hands of Douglas Perlitz. The Speak Truth to Power group has shipped small care packages and funds to help meet the needs of the abandoned boys. You can

learn more by contacting the group at STTOP, P.O. Box 610156, Newton MA 02461. (Latest information reported by the Connecticut Post is here: <http://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Feds-file-new-charges-against-Perlitz-in-New-York-580464.php> )

## Site Seeing

Father Tom Doyle discusses the recent statement by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

<http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/vaticans-new-norms>

The *New York Times'* Maureen Dowd discusses the Vatican's most recent statements on women's ordination and pedophilia

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/18/opinion/18dowd.html>

The Editors of *America Magazine* recognize VOTF as a group that "promotes excellence and "best practices" in management throughout the church in the United States, drawing on the expertise of the laity" (scroll down to the section titled "Duty Bound")

[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=12387](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=12387)

The United Nations says the child rights report from the Vatican is 13 years overdue

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iVXpldqtwNCWrNHwSiMtY3LCMNxAD9GVEVMO0>

Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg, South Africa, says "Leadership does not have all the answers all the time.

"As Catholics, we need to be trusted enough to make informed decisions about our life, our witness, our expressions of faith, spirituality, prayer, and involvement in the world -- on the basis of a developed conscience. And, as an invitation to an appreciation of conscience and conscientious decisions about life and participation in what is a very human church, I close with the formulation or understanding given by none other than the theologian, Fr. Josef Ratzinger, now pope, when he was a *peritus*, or expert, at Vatican II:

"Over the pope as expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one's own conscience which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even the official church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism".

(Joseph Ratzinger in: *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. V., pg. 134 (Ed) H. Vorgrimler, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967).

To read his entire statement

<http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/catholic-social-teaching-finds-church-leadership-lacking>

## **New York VOTF Awards Priest of Integrity**

*Submitted by Francis Piderit*

The New York affiliate of VOTF awarded Father Roy Bourgeois its Msgr. Philip J. Murnion Priest of Integrity Award at a ceremony in New York City on May 16, 2010, in recognition of his courageous stand in support of justice for women in the Catholic Church.

Following is a letter that Father Bourgeois wrote and agreed could be disseminated. In his letter, he discusses his belief about the ordination of women.

To My Maryknoll Brothers,

May 24, 2010

You have been my community, my family, for 44 years. Because of my love and respect for you and for Maryknoll, I want to explain, as best I can, why I believe women should be ordained in our Church.

As a young man in the military, I felt God was calling me to be a priest. After much discernment, I entered Maryknoll and was ordained in 1972. I am grateful to have found the hope, meaning, and joy I was seeking in life.

In my ministry over the years, I have met many devout women in our Church who feel called by God to the priesthood, just as we do as men. And why shouldn't they be called? As Catholics, we profess that our all-loving God created men and women of equal worth and dignity. As priests, we all say that the call to the priesthood is a gift and comes from God.

My brothers, who are we to reject God's call of women to the priesthood? Who are we, as men, to say that our call from God is valid, but their call, as women, is not? I believe that our all-powerful God, Creator of the universe, is certainly capable of calling women to be priests.

Our Church leaders tell us that women cannot be priests because Jesus chose only male apostles. With all due respect, this is not accurate. As Christians, we know the importance of the resurrection. It is at the core of our faith. Jesus chose a woman, Mary Magdalene, to be the first witness to His resurrection. She was also

chosen to bring “the good news” to the male apostles and became known as “the apostle to the apostles.” Galatians 3:28 is very clear: “There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are one.” Furthermore, a 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Vatican’s top scripture scholars, concluded that there is no justification in the New Testament for excluding women from the priesthood.

Reflecting on the scriptures, the love of God, and the many stories I have heard from women over the years about their being called by God, I believe that excluding women from ordination is rooted in sexism. Sexism, like racism, is a sin. And no matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination, in the end, it is always wrong.

For the past 20 years I have been speaking out about the injustice of the School of the Americas and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. In conscience, I cannot be silent about an injustice I see much closer to home—an injustice in my Church. The exclusion of women from the priesthood is a grave injustice against women, against our Church, and against our God who is calling women to serve our Church as priests.

Fundamentally, the ordination of women is a matter of justice. At the same time, there are practical benefits to having women priests. As we know, our Church is in a serious crisis. Hundreds of churches are closing because of a shortage of priests. When I entered Maryknoll we had over 300 seminarians preparing for the priesthood. Today we have eight. If we are to have a vibrant and healthy Church rooted in the teachings of Jesus, we need the wisdom, compassion, courage, and gifts of women in the priesthood.

Like the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement, and the right of women to vote, the ordination of women is inevitable because it is just. Let us be on the right side of history.

Our Maryknoll community is well known and respected for its work for justice and the oppressed. My brothers, I respectfully ask that you break your silence and stand in solidarity with the many women in our Church who, like you and me, are called by God to the priesthood.

Signed,  
Your brother in Christ,  
Roy Bourgeois, M.M.

Calendar

Come and Listen to “BLESS ME, FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED!” PRIESTLY  
SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT - A DRAMATIC  
PRESENTATION OF COURT DOCUMENTS

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

Saturday, November 13, 2010 Norwalk Concert Hall, Norwalk City Hall, East Avenue, Norwalk.

Registration. See [www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org). Send form and check for \$40 to VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport, 191-C Main Street, New Canaan, CT 06840  
A box lunch will be provided.

## Letters

Dear Editor,

I appreciated the letter from Br. Thomas Draney in your July 9, 2010, issue. Re-creating the house church is a way some of us can remain rooted in our Catholic faith even while disillusioned with the hierarchical exclusive institutional aspect of our church. Intentional Eucharistic Communities are the 21st century's house churches - small, egalitarian, honoring our tradition while respecting the priesthood of the baptized. If anyone is interested, I invite them to visit our web site for more details and a partial list of IECs across the U.S.A.

Sincerely,  
Ellen Radday for the Network of IECs  
[www.intentionaleucharisticcommunities.org/](http://www.intentionaleucharisticcommunities.org/)

*Note from the Editor:* *National Catholic Reporter* did an article on intentional Eucharistic communities last year. <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/carving-out-spiritual-home>

## Looking for a Good Book?

Try *Tatoos on the Heart (The Power of Boundless Compassion)* by Gregory Boyle, a Jesuit priest. (Use the Amazon link on VOTF and VOTF will get a portion of the purchase price) It is the tale of Boyle's over-20 years of working with gang members in Los Angeles County. It was a *Publisher's Weekly* starred review and the *Los Angeles Times* said it was "Destined to become a classic of both urban reportage and contemporary spirituality." And please let me know what you think of it ...