

July 25 2008 Issue

Pope Visits Australia, Meets with Abuse Victims

Pope Benedict XVI ended his visit to Australia on Monday, July 21 by meeting with victims of sexual abuse inflicted by Roman Catholic clergy. The meeting capped Benedict's July 12-21 visit to Sydney, Australia, for World Youth Day. During the meeting, the Pope conducted a private Mass and spoke with four abuse victims — two men and two women — at a cathedral in Sydney shortly before leaving Australia. The meeting comes on the heels of a similar one in the United States in April. It also followed an apology — again similar to the one made en route to the U.S. — issued while the Pope was flying to Australia.

For more information on those meetings, click on the following links:

<http://ncrcafe.org/node/2010>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=92441540>

For a look at other topics the Pope mentioned, click here.

Pope Expounds Upon Need to Care for Environment

During the Pope's visit to Australia he repeatedly mentioned the need to care for our environment. "It's not my intention to enter into the technical questions which politicians and specialists have to resolve, but to offer essential impulses for seeing the responsibility, for being capable of responding to this great challenge: rediscovering in Creation the face of the Creator, rediscovering our responsibility before the Creator for the Creation which he has entrusted to us, forming the ethical capacity for a style of life that's necessary to assume if we want to address the problem posed by this situation and if we really want to arrive at positive solutions."

Aside from numerous public comments, the pope has also approved plans to install solar panels atop the Paul VI Audience Hall, in addition to signing an agreement to reforest a stretch of central Hungary sufficient to offset the Vatican's annual carbon output.

You can find additional details in the National Catholic Reporter's coverage of the papal visit to Australia:

<http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1405>

<http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1428>

Bishop Robinson Praises VOTF

On Bishop Robinson's return to Australia after his U.S./Canada tour, he responded to the support he received from American audiences and the attempts to dissuade him from the book tour. Among his words were an assessment of VOTF members he met while here:

"I met many wonderful and inspiring people who welcomed me and invited me into their homes. Most were from the organization called Voice of the Faithful, that started in Boston in 2002 in response to the revelations of sexual abuse there and wants to see a comprehensive response to those revelations. If this makes them "not in communion" with the church, then we all have a most serious problem!!"

To see more of what Bishop Robinson said about his tour, check the *Catholica Australia* website.

Bishop Robinson to Cardinal Re: It's Not So

While in the U.S. and Canada, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson avoided responding to pressure from a Vatican official and some fellow bishops to abandon his book tour. But when he returned to Australia, Bishop Robinson posted his thoughts on the *Catholica Australia* website.:

"In his letter asking me to cancel the tour, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, said, 'It has been brought to my attention by some Bishops in the United States who are concerned that you have been invited by some organizations that are not in communion with the Catholic Church...'.

"This is the exact opposite of my experience. The people who came to listen were mainly older people who had spent their lives as faithful and loyal Catholics, raising their children in that faith and supporting the church in every way they could. They still practice their faith. Yes, there were also victims present, and married priests and gay people and three Catholic women ordained as priests. Some of these were angry, some disillusioned and many were struggling hard to keep faith in the church. But even these disaffected people still cared and still wanted to see a better church.

“To dismiss the entire audience as "not in communion with the church" is a complete failure to understand the book I have written or the response it has evoked among many thousands of Catholics of every age. My overwhelming thought was that, if the church loses these people, it has lost its very soul.”

To read the rest of Bishop Robinson's thoughts on his US visit go to:

http://www.catholica.com.au/gc2/occ/014_occ_030708.php

National VOTF News

Council Fills Out Remaining Seats on the Board of Trustees

At its meeting on June 3, 2008, the Board of Trustees appointed Ron DuBois (Region 1) and Ed Wilson (Region 2) as the elected representatives of the National Representative Council to the Board.

The NRC re-elected Ron DuBois to a second term and elected Ed Wilson to fill the seat vacated when Dan Bartley became President in March.

The appointments mean that all eleven seats on the Board are full once again.

Four seats will become vacant in June 2009 when the 3-year terms of Bill Casey, John Hushon, Elia Marnik, and Jim Post (appointed to fill the unexpired term of David O'Brien who resigned earlier this year) expire. The Trustee Nominating Committee of the Board will begin a search for candidates well in advance of the expiration date.

The full list of Trustees for Fiscal Year 2009 is:

- Dan Bartley (Long Island, NY)
- Bill Casey, chair (Alexandria, VA)
- Ron DuBois (Braintree, MA)
- Mary Pat Fox (New York, NY)
- Svea Fraser (Wellesley, MA)
- John Hushon (Naples, FL)
- Elia Marnik (Reading, MA)
- Jayne O'Donnell (West Hartford, CT)
- Jim Post (Wellesley, MA)
- Dan Sullivan (New Canaan, CT)
- Ed Wilson (Brooklyn, NY)

VOTF Trustees Thank Dan and Sheila Daley of Call to Action

The Board of Trustees of Voice of the Faithful recently sent a letter of thanks and appreciation to Dan and Sheila Daley of Call to Action as they step down from their leadership positions.

Many founding leaders of VOTF recall fondly the encouragement and kind friendship Dan and Sheila extended to them as VOTF came into existence six years ago during one of the most turbulent periods in the life of our church in this country. Then and now, VOTF continues to draw upon their foundational work to nurture and empower the role and responsibility of lay Catholics in the life and welfare of our Church.

Speaking Out

Two VOTF members made their voices heard in the July 11 issue of the National Catholic Reporter. To see what John Ryan and Sister Maureen Turlish had to say to the Editors of the National Catholic Reporter click on the following link:

<http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1388>

Site Seeing

Coalition of American Nuns Opposes Interdiction

On June 26, 2008, Archbishop Raymond Leo Burke removed Sister Louise Lears, SC, from the Pastoral Team of Saint Cronan Parish and placed her under an interdict, which prohibits the reception of the Sacraments. Her offense? She supported the ordination of two women to the Roman Catholic Priesthood in November 2007 in St. Louis. In late December 2007, the Archbishop delivered to Sister Louise a formal summons, accusing her of four canon law violations. He followed that with the formal interdiction just before his elevation to a new Vatican post: prefect of the church's highest canonical court in Rome.

The National Coalition of American Nuns* and the people of St. Cronan's parish are circulating a petition to show their support Sister Louise. You can read the details here. <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/10/Take-Action-for-Sister-Louise>

For **background** on the case, click on the links below:

<http://www.stcronan.org/site/louiselearsdecree.html>

* Founded in 1969, the National Coalition of American Nuns is a Roman Catholic organization of women religious dedicated to studying, working and speaking out on issues of human rights and justice in Church and society.

Bishops Say No to Liturgy Translation

In a relatively rare action, U.S. bishops have formally rejected a new translation of the Roman Missal that the Vatican was eager to institute. First hint that the translation would not win automatic approval came during the Spring meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops when some spoke out against awkward

wordings and obscure references. The translation failed to win the votes needed for approval there, so the final vote hinged on ballots mailed to bishops who had missed the meeting. Final tally? Bishops said no. You can read the story here.

www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0803548.htm

Also Lost in Translation? Stories of Women in the Bible

Although any Bible reader can recall stories of St. Mary of Magdala and other women in Scriptures, when it comes to Sunday Masses the lectionary texts focus almost entirely on what happened to the men in the Bible. Now there's a move under way to restore some of those **lost stories**.

At over 250 international celebrations of the July 22 Feast of St. Mary of Magdala, special prayer services brought to visibility biblical women leaders whose stories have been omitted or downgraded in lectionary texts.

At these celebrations, thousands of Catholics organized to ask the Vatican and US and Canadian Bishops to restore women leaders such as Mary of Magdala and Phoebe the deacon to lectionary texts from which they have been deleted, and to invite female biblical scholars to the *International Synod on the Word* to be held in Rome October 5-26 at the request of Pope Benedict XVI.

“Unfortunately, for centuries, Mary of Magdala’s leadership and that of many other biblical women, has been minimized or excised from the official lectionary used in both Catholic and Protestant churches,” said Sr. Christine Schenk, FutureChurch Executive Director. “For example, even though all four gospels name Mary of Magdala as the first witness to the Resurrection, Jesus’ commission asking her to proclaim it to the male disciples is never read on Sunday, yet we hear about doubting Thomas every single year.”

FutureChurch board member Barbara Litrell added: “Phoebe, an important leader and deacon at the Church of Cenchrae, is completely excised from the lectionary text of Paul’s letter to the Romans, as are Lois and Eunice from the letter to Timothy. We want Church officials to correct that.”

Spearheaded by the Cleveland-based FutureChurch, Catholics are also asking synod leaders to devote more pastoral attention to Jesus and St. Paul’s inclusive practice and expand preaching opportunities for qualified women.

For more information on the celebrations of the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala please go to <http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1470>
