

News from National

Pentecost Suggestions

VOTF recently published a brochure “Become a 21st Century Disciple” which lists 10 things you can do to help your church, including “get involved in your church, protect children, reach out to survivors” and more. It is full of simple things you can do to help your church.

To read the brochure, or print it out, go to <http://votf.org/pentecost.pdf>

Response to the brochure has been overwhelming. We have reports from more than 10 parishes about the positive response by both parishioners and hierarchy, including the one below.

“We had a very good experience here in New York. After Mass, about 30-40 parishioners gathered in the auditorium for a public reading of the letter from Hans Kung, and a reading of our 10 actions, followed by a discussion. The parish served a hot meal as well to all participants. All this proceeded with the blessings of the pastor, who also participated in the discussion period. We had several invitations from attendees to come and do a similar discussion at their parish, leading us to believe that this meeting format—a study document and a discussion period—would be a very positive tool for VOTF outreach to parishes in the future. Our members also handed out flyers in at least four other parishes in Manhattan on Saturday/Sunday, including one Opus Dei parish. We were rebuffed by one pastor, who did not want us to hand out the flyers, which he felt were too controversial. So on balance, we did well.

FXP

VOTF Asks for Accountability from the Irish Delegation

VOTF released the following press release last week asking for accountability during the visit to Ireland of the special envoy from the Vatican. “There is a lot of work to be done not only in Ireland but for the Catholic Church as a whole,” said VOTF President Dan Bartley. “We call on the commission to take testimony from any members of the laity who wish to testify in public session, so that the people of Ireland have an opportunity to speak about the pain and betrayal they have suffered at the hands of the clergy and the hierarchy. No serious investigation of the Catholic Church in Ireland can be considered comprehensive without the participation of the laity.”

To read the release <http://votf.org/pressrelease/press-release-for-immediate-release/12577>

The *Boston Globe* reported on Cardinal O'Malley being sent to Ireland
http://www.boston.com/news/local/breaking_news/2010/05/pope_assigns_ca.html

News from Universal Church Reform Team

The Bishop Initiative Committee of the Universal Church Reform Team recently wrote to Pope Benedict XVI with a proposal for injecting meaningful lay input into the selection of bishops for local dioceses. This VOTF proposal would restore to the bishop selection process many of the lay-involvement practices followed throughout the first and well into the second millennium, while recognizing the authority of the Pope (affirmed in Canon Law and Vatican II) to make the final appointment of a bishop, generally from the recommendations submitted for each diocese.

To read proposal, <http://votf.org/page/lay-input-bishop-selection-process/10586>

Have You Sent in Your Certificate of Accountability? Did you get a Response?

Help us break through clericalism and promote transparency and accountability with this one simple step: send a **Catholic Certification of Accountability** to your diocese the next time you return a donation envelope. The certificate prints out on your home computer, and there are extras to pass to friends. Change in the Church begins with us. Let us know how it goes!

Affiliate News

News from the Winchester, MA VOTF Affiliate

Submitted by Clare Keane

The Winchester MA affiliate used a discussion guide you can find on their web site [LINK words "web site" to <http://www.votfwinchester.org/previousevents.html>] to hold a good group discussion on May 3. When you open the web page, click on "Is There No End" on the right side of the page. You may use whatever you want. The discussion may go in different directions at each table, but people will contribute. We had to stop the meeting at 9:10 and are planning to continue the conversation at some point.

Michigan Statute of Limitations Legislative Update

Submitted by Brad Pritts

Currently, a bill to modify the statute of limitations for civil actions involving sexual abuse of minors has been introduced in the Michigan House of Representatives. The bill, H.B. 5699, has been sponsored by Deb Kennedy , (D- Brownstown). As of June 1, the bill is in the Judiciary Committee; an initial hearing was held and the bill remains under consideration.

See this page for the bill's provisions and some recommendations on ways to help.

Michigan Statute of Limitations Legislative Update

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The provisions of Michigan House Bill 5699 on civil-action statutes of limitations include:

- 1) An extension of the statute of limitations from the current limit of 2 years after the victim attains age 18, to 30 years after attainment of age 18.
- 2) A 2-year "window" during which no statute of limitations will apply.

Other aspects of the bill provide extensions for litigation involving medical malpractice.

The bill itself can be found on the State's website at

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2009-2010/billintroduced/House/pdf/2009-HIB-5699.pdf>

To get the status of the bill on the committee, see the committee's detailed legislative status at

<http://legislature.mi.gov/documents/2009-2010/committeebillrecord/house/htm/2009-HCBR-JUDI.htm>

VOTF has supported statute of limitation reform in other states, in recognition of the fact that many victims of clergy sexual abuse are not prepared to pursue these claims until well into adulthood. While it is true that it is difficult to judge a case where the harm occurred many years in the past, we believe that equity demands that these victims be offered the chance to seek justice. Perpetrators, or the organizations who shield them, should not be allowed to escape liability because a youthful victim requires age and maturity to deal with the harm done.

What can you do?

All VOTF members in Michigan are encouraged to write their state representatives in support of the bill, H.B. 5699; and further to write their state senators to request that a parallel bill be introduced in the State Senate. For the contact information for your state representatives, see the state sites:

http://house.michigan.gov/find_a_rep.asp to find your state representative

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/SenatorInfo/find-your-senator.htm> to find your senator.

While we disagree with the position taken on this bill by the Michigan Catholic Conference, their recommendations on how to communicate with your legislators are well done. These can be found in:

<http://www.micatholicconference.org/public-policy/legislative-advocacy-information/grassroots-advocacy/>

Many recommend that letters to legislators be kept short and to the point. To be effective, name the bill (House Bill 5699); and state your position specifically (That you support the measure); and finally, what you would like the legislator to do (“support the bill”, “introduce a bill”, etc.)

Additionally, members are encouraged to write their bishops to support the legislation, and request that the Michigan Catholic Conference (who serve as the public policy researchers and lobbyists on behalf of the Michigan bishops) withdraw its opposition to the bill.

Site Seeing

New York’s Effort to Lengthen Statute of Limitation Dies Again:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/03/nyregion/03abuse.html>

Not Enough Evidence to Charge Los Angeles Diocesan Officials:

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-06-04-mahony03_ST_N.htm?csp=34&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+Religion-TopStories+\(News+-+Religion+-+Top+Stories\)](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-06-04-mahony03_ST_N.htm?csp=34&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+Religion-TopStories+(News+-+Religion+-+Top+Stories))

US Catholic – Truth shall set us free

<http://www.uscatholic.org/church/2010/03/truth-shall-set-us-free-responding-sex-abuse-crisis>

A portrait of Bishop Olmstead of Phoenix:

<http://ncronline.org/news/people/thomas-j-olmsted-portrait-policy-driven-bishop>

Article on Nun “Excommunicated” in Arizona:

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2010/05/15/20100515phoenix-catholic-nun-abortion.html#ixzz0oE7vZDvj>

Futurechurch Organizes Support for St. Mary of Magdala

Futurechurch is organizing worldwide celebrations to promote St. Mary of Magdala and to advocate for women’s roles in the Church today. They are asking people to ORGANIZE a special celebration of her feast day, July 22nd, to honor this great woman witness of faith known in the early Church as the “Apostle to the Apostles”. For more information go to www.futurechurch.org or call 216-228-0869 (x3).

Calendar

Mark Massa, S.J. to Speak to VOTF

Mark Massa, S.J., Co-Director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University, will speak at the Voice of the Faithful meeting on Thursday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk. His topic will be: "The Church in the 21st Century: Evangelical and Catholic."

His research interest is the Catholic experience in the United States since World War II. His book, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team*, published by Crossroad Press in 1999, studies three iconic elements of the church in the 20th century. His more recent work, *Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice?* (Crossroad Press, 2003), shows the differences in how Catholics and other Americans see the world have contributed to the perception of Catholics by their fellow citizens. Presently he is working on a history of Catholic theology in the United States since the Second Vatican Council.

After completing his undergraduate studies at the University of Detroit, Fr. Massa received master's degrees from the University of Chicago and Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and his doctorate in church history from Harvard University.

The Coastal Delmarva Affiliate of the Voice of the Faithful invites you to the second in its *Voices for Accountability Series* on Wednesday, June 16 (7:00 p.m.) at the South Coastal Library, 43 Kent Avenue, Bethany Beach, DE. Rev. Donald Cozzens, recipient of Voice of the Faithful's 2009 Priest of Integrity Award will speak on "Fidelity in Troubled Times."

Fr. Cozzens is a priest in the Diocese of Cleveland and former seminary rector of St. Mary's Seminary and Graduate School of Theology. He currently teaches Religious Studies at John Carroll University.

In his lectures, TV appearances and award-winning books (*The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, *Sacred Silence*, *Faith That Dares to Speak*, and *Freeing Celibacy*) Fr. Cozzens addresses subjects such as the roots of the clergy sex-abuse crisis, the need for ongoing renewal and reform of the Church and the rights of lay Catholics.

In his presentation he will discuss the current problems in the Church and the response needed by clergy and laity alike to bring about needed reform while maintaining fidelity to tradition.

Book Review

Submitted by Laura Krawitt

Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary by Miri Rubin, a professor of medieval history at London University. Yale University Press, 2009, 533 pp. 29 color illustrations.

As Rubin states in her introduction, “Mother of God is a history of the ideas, practices and images that developed around the figure of the Virgin Mary from the earliest times until around the year 1600.” The chapters, somewhat chronological, explain the context from which her sources derive: poetry, art, scripture, music and miracle tales.

Thus one follows Mary, the young 14-year-old mother of Jesus, seldom mentioned in the Gospels but soon affirmed as Theotokos – God-Bearer, as she gains in stature over the centuries portrayed in altar paintings, sculpture, poetry and music. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) used song, the hymn “Ave generosa,” to describe her notion of the Incarnation. In opposition to the belittling religious imagery of women associated with Eve, Hildegard’s Mary is active and dynamic. There are miracle tales and numerous apparitions, some of which Rubin describes as quite imaginative, apart from her generally matter-of-fact presentations. The notions of virginity as purity, of chastity and celibacy as ideals were familiar themes then as among the hierarchy today.

Mary becomes different personas to different populations and at different time periods: the imperial figure in Constantinople, the eastern power center of early Christianity; the loving, nursing mother of the infant Jesus; the grieving mother at the crucifixion; the power behind European kings; along with the underlying conundrum, a mother yet a virgin. Images and celebrations of Mary as queen or mother follow Christian explorers to many continents and diverse cultures.

For the ordinary reader, *Mother of God* can be at once challenging and compelling. Together with details creating the context of Marian devotions, noting also the Jewish response and the place of Mary in the Koran, Rubin creates a fascinating, scholarly, well-documented history of Christianity during that period.

More comprehensive reviews by Donna Spivey Ellington, Gardner Webb University; by Kathryn Hughes, *The Guardian*, 14 Feb. 2009; by Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, in *The Financial Times*®, and by the *Economist*, 19 February 2009 appear on the internet.