

News from National

Finance Councils Necessary for Accountability

The latest report about embezzlement of Catholic Church funds comes from Waterbury, Connecticut, where a parish pastor is now being investigated for the embezzlement of nearly \$1 billion of parish funds. The parishioners say they are in shock. But their shock could have been avoided if a functional, independent parish finance council, as required by canon law, had been in place at Sacred Heart-Sagrado Corazon.

Dioceses across the United States are mandated by canon law to implement such finance councils. Information about Canon Law 537 can be easily found on many parish websites as well the website of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. But the Archdiocese of Hartford provides no such information and Sacred Heart-Sagrado Corazon Parish also failed to submit annual reports. The Archdiocese of Hartford has itself not published a public annual report since the 1980s.

Voice of the Faithful has long advocated for transparent appointment and reporting from parish finance councils, including in the Hartford archdiocese. "We met with then-Archbishop Daniel Cronin in 2002-2003 and identified the lack of finance councils as a problem," says Jayne O'Donnell from West Hartford. "We even offered to help him establish finance councils and pastoral councils in the parishes but he refused. Now the parishioners in Waterbury face major problems. It could have all been avoided. Parishes in the diocese—and in others as well—should be surveyed and then monitored by the diocese to ensure they are in compliance with canon law and providing independent reports to their parishioners."

Prophetic Voices

Over the last few months we have seen the momentum of change in the Church begin shifting at last, towards recognition even at the highest levels that structural reforms are essential. For years, Voice of the Faithful has made this same call, highlighting the many ways that transparency and accountability could begin to restore the Church. Published reports in recent months show that many, even in the hierarchy, finally see the same needs. We have compiled a few of what we call "Prophetic Voices" for our members. 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 vineyard@votf.org and we will try to include it.

<http://votf.org/propheticvoices>

Update on Accountability Certificate

Bill Cherico attached VOTF's Accountability Certificate to his donation a couple of weeks ago and received his check back from his diocese with a letter stating that the diocese did not feel that it "could comply with our request for the American Bishops to be more assertive and vocal in promoting structural change within our church." Read Bill's letter to his local pastor [here](#).

Did you use the Accountability Certificate in your church? Did you get a response? Let us know; we'd like to hear how it went. If you haven't downloaded the Certificate, [click here](#).

Dear Fr. Romanus:

We are in receipt of your letter dated May 14, 2010, asking for our participation in this year's Bishop's Fund. Regrettably, we will not be as active as we were in the past due to my correspondence with the Diocese on the issue of the Church scandals arising in Europe.

When we did submit our check to the Bishop's fund it was returned to us because the Diocese felt it could not comply with our request for the American Bishops to be more assertive and vocal in promoting structural change within our Church. Please note the attached "Accountability Sheet" that I submitted as a member of Voice of the Faithful.

The criteria stated on this sheet simply assert the very same goals and objectives that the US Council of Bishops has already endorsed. However, because this organization is made of Catholic laity, this diocese chooses not to recognize it as a source for greater outreach and communication with parishioners. I do not understand why the diocese doesn't view this organization as "helping hand" in dealing with continuing scandals in this country as well as those mushrooming throughout Europe.

The faith in Christ Anne and I have is monolithic. The confidence in our Church is suspect. As our pastor I thought you should know and be aware of these facts.

Sincerely,
Bill Cherico

c/c: Most Reverend Salvatore Matano, Bishop Burlington
Kevin P. Scully, Director, Office of Safe Environment Programs
END LINK

Book Review

Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates, by Ladislav Orsy, S.J.

Reviewed by Ron DuBois

Ladislav Orsy, a well-known and respected canon lawyer from Georgetown University, was an advisor on the rights of Catholics to the founders of Voice of the Faithful. During the Second Vatican Council he was professor of Canon Law at the Gregorian University in Rome, and an expert advisor to an Archbishop at the Council itself. In the latter role he had access to the thoughts of the bishops in attendance and to the formation of the documents of the Council.

In this recent book Orsy chronicles how one of the main themes of the Council—an emphasis on communion and respect for diversity in the Church—has been rolled back since the end of the Council. It is his claim that these themes have been replaced with an emphasis on uniformity and centralization. He focuses on several documents of Pope John Paul II since the Council.

Of special interest is an examination of Pope John Paul II's *motu proprio* "Apostolos Suos," released in 1998. Although this document appears to support the concept of collegiality of bishops that was articulated at the Council, Orsy argues that it actually undermines the authority of Episcopal Conferences. He argues that the Council based the concept of collegiality on the ordination of bishops as successors of the apostles, whereas "Apostolos Suos" holds that the authority of the bishops is authority delegated by the Holy See.

The church, the People of God, form one body united by the Spirit. As St. Paul says, the one Body of Christ is made up of many parts and each part has its own function and is due its own respect. Orsy often refers to the Eastern Rite churches in which synods of bishops are accorded an internal authority which is the work of the Spirit and is not delegated from a higher human authority. As Orsy implies, how can the Spirit work in an organic way in one part of the church and only in a top-down delegated way in another?

Turning to the laity, Orsy addresses the question of why the revised Canon Law explicitly excludes the laity from any major decision-making processes. His historical analysis indicates that many church Councils were called by laity and dominated by lay input and lay votes. This, he claims, has been reversed by Canon 129, which restricts decision-making power to the ordained clergy. Orsy argues that the Second Vatican Council, with its emphasis on the primacy of baptism in initiating members into the one body of Christ, re-opened the doors to an understanding of the dignity and the essential role that the laity play in the constitution of the church.

Orsy also explores the role of reception of teaching and especially of law in the life of the Church. He comes down clearly on the necessity of the law to be life-giving and not life-restricting, and that the interaction between the living

experience of the faithful and the law-makers is essential for a truly authentic formulation of law.

Of special interest is a lengthy exchange between Orsy and Cardinal Ratzinger which took place in 1998 in the pages of a German theological journal, *Stimmen der Zeit*. Orsy argues that Pope John Paul's 1998 *motu proprio* "Ad tuendam fidem" has created a new category of "definitive teaching," which is not infallible but irreformable. This teaching has been incorporated into canon 750 of the church's Canon Law.

Ratzinger, for his part, defends the central authority of the papacy; and the two agree to disagree. It is unfortunate for most of us in the United States that this important dialogue took place in German more than 10 years ago and is just now finding publication in English in this new book. It is clear that the dialogue joined here has continued among canon lawyers and theologians, and will greatly influence the future direction of the church.

A Tribute to Hugh Lawrence Burns

By Father Hugh Burns

I write these paragraphs as I sit by my dad's bedside in hospice in Sun City Center, Florida. He is close to death, and therefore even closer to life. My father, Hugh Lawrence Burns, Sr, founded the Voice of the Faithful in Tampa Bay in 2002. Although my parents have lived in Florida since 1986, they raised my sisters and me in Needham, Massachusetts. When the abuse crisis erupted in Boston in 2002 it hit them hard. In starting VOTF locally my dad did all he could in both a faith-filled and uncompromisingly determined way to keep the spotlight of truth on the issue. He was often called to comment in print and on television on the scandal crisis.

My dad was born in Ansonia, Connecticut, on November 7, 1927. We moved to Needham in 1956 where my dad pursued his career as a lab technician and psychiatric social worker for the Veterans Administration. In failing health he and my mother, Betty, retired to Sun City Center in 1986. Never minding a weakened constitution, he immediately involved himself in countless civic, religious and social activities. The Church was always his primary focus. For 20 years he and my mom brought communion to local nursing homes, sang in the choir and served as Respect Life chairpersons. As long as his health allowed my dad lobbied the state legislature in Tallahassee on behalf of the Florida Catholic Conference on life and justice issues. In 1996 both mom and dad were named Knights of Columbus "Family of the Year" for Florida.

Closest to my dad's heart was his prison ministry, which he started at the Hillsborough State Correctional Facility. For 20 years he brought his gentle zeal and social work skills to this task. His latest project was a rose garden for the

women inmates to tend. In November 2009 the State of Florida named the garden for him. Tampa Bay Channel 9 named him a "Local Hero" for his prison work as well as for serving on the local parole board for youth offenders.

Although VOTF was ejected from the local parish, Fr Demetrio Lorden of the Mexican mission, Our Lady of Guadalupe in Wimauma, welcomed the affiliate. The Florida sun has faded many bumper stickers on Dad's car. But he just put on a fresh one before his most recent hospitalization, and he instructed my mother to bury him with his VOTF pin prominently displayed.

My dad was always a man of faith, family and an unstoppable activist. Mother Jones' motto might as well be his: "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living!" Please pray for him.

June 23, 2010

Members Speak Out

Carolyn Disco, from New Hampshire VOTF, has posted at length on the issue of movable abuse-evaluation standards and how they make it harder for abuse allegations to be evaluated. Read the article and Carolyn's comments on *Commonweal* magazine's website at <http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/?p=8780&cpage=1#comment-75602>. Carolyn asks "If bishops can legislate their own standards in violation of church law and the Charter/Norms, what has been wrought here?"

Site Seeing

Priests removed for sexual/financial impropriety
<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/news/23969878/detail.html>

Another priest removed due to accusations of financial misconduct
http://www.courant.com/community/waterbury/hc-waterbury-priest-0621-20100621_0_4789886.story

Jason Berry writes on the ordeal of Maciel's son...
<http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/maciel's-son-sue-legionaries-details-abuse-tells-ncr-dad-promised-6-million>

Georgetown professor declares excommunication of Sister Margaret Mary McBride "null and void" based on Canon Law
http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?blog_id=2&entry_id=3013