

June 4 In the Vineyard

## **News from National**

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

As a grassroots movement, ensuring that the voices of our members are heard is critical to our success. A task force committee has been formed to investigate and propose alternative models to the National Representative Council to best represent the grassroots voice of the VOTF membership. The committee has begun its work and will present proposals at the September meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Co-chairs are Elia Marnik and Mary Pat Fox. Members also include Bill Casey, Ron DuBois, Svea Fraser, Anne Wilson, David Biersmith and Jim Beyers. The committee is actively soliciting input from VOTF members. You can send your suggestions to Elia or Mary Pat at the email addresses below.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Elia Marnik  
[eliamarnik@comcast.net](mailto:eliamarnik@comcast.net)

Mary Pat Fox  
[mpfox1@aol.com](mailto:mpfox1@aol.com)

## **Nominations for Priests of Integrity Awards**

Presentation at the 2009 VOTF Conference

All affiliates and members of VOTF are invited to nominate priests whose actions exemplify the gospel imperatives of honesty, openness, courage and compassion. While many priests work faithfully and often anonymously in their ministries, we encourage acknowledgment of specific acts that demonstrate the leadership needed in our church.

### **NOMINATION / SELECTION COMMITTEE:**

Members of the *ad hoc* subcommittee of the Goal #2 National Working Group:

Joan Bedosky NY (Member, National Working Group for Priest Support)  
Fran Hofmeister OH (Member, NWGPS)  
Bev Rowden CA (Member, NWGPS, RECEIVES 2009 nominations)  
Elizabeth Warren TN (Member, NWGPS)  
Bud Bretschneider PA (Representative of the General Membership)  
Svea Fraser MA (Trustee, *ex officio* Member of NWGPS)

More Information [link from the More Info item – or even make it a button?]  
[begin linked info below]

## **Nominations for Priests of Integrity Awards**

### **REQUIRED INFORMATION for NOMINATIONS**

- NAME of Priest Nominee
- ROLE of Nominee (pastor, theologian, etc.)
- NAME of Nominator and Affiliate (include contact information)
- REASON for Nomination (300 words or less—specific **examples of noteworthy actions**)
- SUPPORTING EVIDENCE (If available...newspaper articles, etc.)
- AVAILABILITY- Verify that priest is willing to be considered for this public recognition (This is very important to confirm)
- REFERENCES - Contact information of individuals who are willing to support this nomination.

### **WHERE TO SUBMIT NOMINATIONS**

**Email to:**

- bevrowden@sbcglobal.net
- Subject Line: **“Priests of Integrity” Nomination**  
OR

**Postal mail to:**

- VOTF Attn: “Priests of Integrity” Nomination
- Box 423, Newton, MA 02464

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

- **AUGUST 1, 2009:** DEADLINE for receiving nominations
- September 1, 2009: NOTIFY Recipient(s) of the award

### **PRESENTATION OF AWARD**

WHEN: October 30/31, 2009  
 EVENT: 2009 VOTF Conference  
 WHERE: Huntington Hilton, Melville, Long Island, NY  
 THEME: *MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD*  
 SPEAKERS: Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, Fr. Thomas Reese, SJ

### **NOMINATING PROCEDURE**

Background (Criteria), Procedure for Nomination and Selection, Past Recipients and Honorary Mentions available at

- NWGPS web site: <http://www.nwgps.org/content/priest-integrity-award>
- OR
- VOTF web site: <http://www.votf.org/priest-support/71>

Please Join Us!  
 2009 Voice of the Faithful National Conference  
 Making our Voices Heard  
 Hosted by the Long Island Voice of the Faithful  
 October 30-31 2009

Featured Speakers: Joan Chittister, O.S.B and  
Fr. Thomas Reese, S.J.

Location: Huntington Hilton, Melville, Long Island

[Click here for hotel information](#)

Join us as we pray together as one voice, learn about VOTF's current strategic plan and exciting new projects, and participate in stimulating conversations. It is a great chance to catch up with old friends and make some new ones as we convene some of the most active and committed Catholics to "make our voices heard."

## **Affiliate News**

Submitted by Clare Keane

On Monday June 1, Winchester Area VOTF held a Prayer Service of Hope and Healing in St. Eulalia's Church. Prayers were read by many of the participants, hymns of comfort were sung, and petitions were placed in front of the altar. As a prayerful voice, we fulfilled our VOTF goal, and also brought our personal intentions to the service.

Many of our loved ones are facing serious illness, notably our pastor Fr. Tom Nestor, and also Bob Morris, the founder of our affiliate, who was diagnosed last year with ALS. Bob continues to work and to visit the affiliate from his new home in Rhode Island, even as the disease progresses.

On that topic, a group of us are walking for Bob in the Sharon Timlin Road Race in Hopkinton, MA on June 20.

## **Platform News**

*Editor's Note: The following is part of an ongoing series of updates from our platform groups.*

### **Spiritual & Communal Growth Platform**

*Submitted by Kevin O'Connor*

Several months ago a member of our Board of Trustees chided VOTF for our lax attitude towards prayer. She acknowledged that our gatherings invariably begin with a prayer. But from that point on, prayer becomes secondary to more pressing matters. It was from that casual remark that the Spiritual & Communal Growth Platform began to take shape.

### **Spiritual & Communal Growth Platform**

*Submitted by Kevin O'Connor*

Our mission is straightforward: "To facilitate spiritual development and foster community within Voice of the Faithful through resources, programs and activities that encourage members to maintain a prayerful voice attentive to the Spirit." The approach we've taken draws on the rich heritage of our Christian tradition, and blends it with a touch of modern technology.

We begin with a web based Resource Center that focuses on spirituality and prayer. The person visiting this site (which will be accessible through [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org)) will find descriptions of various prayer forms, along with suggestions for their use in our private lives, our parish, and at VOTF meetings and activities. Imbedded computer links will take the site visitor directly to other websites, book offerings and related materials and opportunities that have been shown to enhance the prayer experience.

Resource Center visitors will also have an opportunity, through our Spiritual & Communal Growth blog, to exchange ideas and suggestions about taking responsibility for spiritual development, and fostering development of a true Christian community within the membership of Voice of the Faithful. And yes, we will encourage short reviews of spiritual writings, both current and classic, as well as descriptions of spiritual and community-building activities carried out in affiliates around the country. Anyone for a national VOTF Solidarity Sunday where members and supporters are invited to participate in a mass honoring our patron, John XXIII? It could happen.

We hope that members will find this Resource Center helpful, and that it will encourage them to contribute to our mutual spiritual development as we follow the Spirit in our continuing efforts to renew the Church with greater input from the laity.

## **International News**

### **Update on the Ryan Report**

*Submitted by Sean O'Conaill*

The impact of the Ryan report is unprecedented in Ireland—with Ireland's bishops seeking to distance themselves from the religious orders in the dock for decades of abuse.

But this is difficult, as we all know that the bishops themselves had the power to prevent what happened and did nothing. They especially did nothing to develop an understanding of Catholic social teaching in the aftermath of Vatican II—the era when most of the now mostly elderly victims suffered every possible kind of abuse.

### **Update on the Ryan Report**

*Submitted by Sean O'Conaill*

More recently appointed bishops such as Diarmuid Martin of Dublin and Noel Traynor of Down and Connor are calling for an inquiry into why so much sexual abuse by clergy and religious was allowed to happen. An upcoming meeting of the Irish Bishops' Conference on June 8-10 is likely to be stormy because the question must arise of whether the bishops of Ireland will all have the courage to investigate themselves and their immediate predecessors!

Lambasting those already in the dock is easy enough. Putting oneself there is something else. But the level of public outrage, and the simple logic of the church's hierarchical structure, demands no less.

## Site Seeing

The nomination of Judge Sotomayer would make Catholics the most represented religion on the Supreme Court.

[http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2009/05/30/obama\\_nomination\\_would\\_boost\\_ranks\\_of\\_catholics\\_on\\_court/](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2009/05/30/obama_nomination_would_boost_ranks_of_catholics_on_court/)

The Catholic church's top women religious organization this week [issued a strong supportive statement](#) for U.S. women religious congregations under investigation by the Vatican. Read more in National Catholic Reporter.

<http://ncronline.org/news/women/international-nuns-group-supports-us-women-religious>

NCR discusses Judge Sotomayer's nomination to the Supreme Court

<http://ncronline.org/news/people/judge-sotomayors-experience-trumps-all>

## Calendar

### SEX ABUSE SURVIVORS TO SPEAK AT VOTF MEETING

Beth McCabe, Connecticut co-chair of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and fellow survivor Brian Walsh will speak at the June meeting of Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport (VOTF), to be held on Thursday, June 4th, at 7:30 pm at The Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk. For more information and directions go to [www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org). All are welcome.

THE GUADALUPE MISSION IN WIMAUMA will hold a Voice of the Faithful meeting from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. June 8 at 16550 S U.S. 301. "Magdalene Sisters," a movie about girls facing abuse in Ireland, will be shown, followed by a discussion. Admission is free. Call (813) 633-8780. St. Petersburg, Florida VOTF.

## Letter to the Editor

VOTF's Bill Casey submitted the following letter to *America Magazine*.

Re: America Editorial, "The Markey Bill", June 1, 2009. *America* calls for justice for those that might be falsely accused of sexually abusing children when it opposes Bill A.2596 currently before the New York legislature. Certainly, the presumption of innocence is a reasonable and time-honored principle in American jurisprudence. But what if that principle upholds justice for a small number of people and allows injustice to affect a much larger group?

The number of clergy who have been falsely accused of sexual abuse over the last seven years pales by comparison to those whom Church officials acknowledge have abused children and for whom they have paid out over 2 billion dollars in settlements alone. How is it justice to prevent those who have been sexually abused as children a one-time opportunity to PROVE their claims in a court of law, if such claims are currently barred by unmercifully short statutes of limitation? Victims face a significant burden in overcoming the staleness of evidence and the unavailability of witnesses in substantiating their claims, but at least they deserve an opportunity to seek legal relief. The evidence is compelling that most child victims of sexual abuse are simply unable to make public their abuse for years and often decades.

Our laws recognize that allegations of murder are justifiable exceptions to statutes of limitations. It's time to recognize that "soul-murder" deserves the same exception. At the same time, justice requires appropriate protections for those accused until a legal judgment is awarded and exoneration if claims are not substantiated. This issue does not lend itself to an either/or choice. Let our Church officials champion justice for all.

Bill Casey  
Alexandria, VA

#### **Update on Vigiling Parishes**

I thought that the *Vineyard* might want to make available for reading the Council of Parishes' Mediation Initiative, which the vigiling, suppressed, and suppression-threatened parishes in 8 dioceses submitted to an undersecretary of state to the Vatican during Holy Week. A copy of the initiative can be found as a .pdf document at the following link to vigiling parish St. Jeremiah in Framingham, MA  
<http://www.stjeremiah.org/MediationProposal.pdf>

To me, the document is the important news, but there are AP reports from Rome and Boston of this event, as well as articles from NCR and the *Tablet* (British Catholic weekly, which carries great weight in the English-speaking world), and local news reports in Boston, Cleveland, New Orleans, Adams, MA, and areas of Pennsylvania. FutureChurch also has collected news reports of this effort.

This effort is consistent with our Third Goal, structural change within the church by increasing lay participation in administration of our parishes, dioceses and Church.  
Sharon Harrington

Scituate MA

Editor's Note: Below is an article from NCR on the vigiling parishes.

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<http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/parish-groups-seek-mediation-church-closings>