

March 25, 2010 In the Vineyard

## **News from National**

### **VOTF Organizing Good Friday Vigils – We Need Your Help!**

The Pope's letter to the people of Ireland called for a day of prayer on Good Friday. We think a National Vigil of Sorrow would be appropriate and we are organizing one.

#### *Stop the Hiding; Start the Healing*

What: Good Friday is a day of sorrow for the Catholic Church. On this solemn day, we stand in solidarity with victims of clergy abuse and, as Pope Benedict requested of the faithful in Ireland, we too devote our penances for the healing and renewal of the Church. We call on our pastoral leaders to say "Stop the Hiding; Start the Healing."

- The revelations emerging from Europe these past weeks demonstrate that all the cases have not been resolved, that some priest offenders are still serving. It is long past time to open the files on sex abuse.
- An apology is not enough. The secrecy and oaths of silence must end. The structures that favor deceptions and cover-ups must fall away in favor of the transparency and accountability essential for healing and rebuilding our Church.

When: Good Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, any time from 12 -3 pm

Where: Your local Cathedral or parish church

Who: Voice of the Faithful members

Please check the website for more information.

### **Pope Releases Pastoral Letter to Ireland**

The long-awaited response from Pope Benedict XVI to the scandal in Ireland arrived last weekend. It recognizes that the Church needs a new vision and calls for investigation of the Irish church. But against a backdrop of growing revelations in Germany, The Netherlands and other European countries—not to mention the roster of clergy sex-abuse revelations across the globe and stretching decades into the past—Pope Benedict once again failed to acknowledge the systemic failures that have led to cover-ups and official silence, and once again failed to hold accountable the bishops who allowed institutional secrecy to override pastoral needs.

To read VOTF's press release, [click here](#).

For news from Ireland, see [Sean O'Conaill's report](#), National Catholic Reporter has the full text of the [Pope's letter to Ireland](#). You also may find this critique of the letter from the Australian group Catholica of interest. [MAUREEN: Here is the link to use on the words "critique of the letter": [http://www.catholica.com.au/editorial/031\\_edit\\_210310.php](http://www.catholica.com.au/editorial/031_edit_210310.php) ]

## **VOTFI statement on the Pastoral Letter of Pope Benedict XVI**

There are aspects of Pope Benedict XVI's pastoral letter that we warmly welcome—especially the recognition that a 'new vision is needed, to inspire present and future generations' in Ireland. The letter will hopefully now precipitate a long-delayed conversation among Irish Catholics—priests, bishops and people together—out of which, with God's help, such a new vision will emerge.

We welcome the papal recognition of the insights that survivors of abuse bring to the church and hope that this will inaugurate an intensive period of listening to them and their families. We welcome his severe confrontation of those who perpetrated abuse. We welcome also the direction now given to church leaders to cooperate with civil authority, and the call for spiritual renewal.

However, the letter's analysis of the causes of the disaster we have suffered is weakened by a failure to recognize a basic structural problem in the church. Secularism is blamed for a weakening of faith in Ireland, but there is no acknowledgement that it was secular agencies such as the media, the police, the civil courts and the state that uncovered a problem kept hidden by the church's own systems of governance. There is no recognition in the pastoral that the concentration of powers exercised by bishops led to a conflict of responsibilities, to a culture of secrecy and in too many cases to an unjust and intimidating response to victims which compounded their sufferings.

As it was these secular processes which created the circumstances that led to the Murphy report—and to this pastoral letter to Ireland—we find it remarkable that the letter makes no reference to this, and sees no serious problem with structures of church governance that did not make church leaders accountable for their actions, or for their failures to act, until secular agencies stepped in.

Changes are needed to canon law to bring about openness and accountability in the governance of the church, ridding us finally of the culture of deference and secrecy that has caused us so much disgrace, distrust and pain. We regret that the pastoral has missed an opportunity to acknowledge this need, but hope that greater transparency and accountability will nevertheless come about as the church continues to learn.

Knowing that it is part of a long-term process of renewal, we believe that aspects of this pastoral letter will help that process reach fruition. We too 'believe deeply in the healing power of [Christ's] self-sacrificing love - even in the darkest and most hopeless situations—to bring liberation and the promise of a new beginning'.

## **A Trip for Two to Ireland**

Do you have the luck of the Irish? Join in on Voice of the Faithful's own version of March madness! Anyone who donates \$50 (\$100 is 2 entries, \$150 is 3 entries and so on) during the month of March will have an opportunity to win a gift certificate to Sceptre Tours. The certificate is good on any of trips available at Sceptre Tours, a European vacation provider specializing in trips to Ireland. Most of the packages include flight, accommodations and transportation. Click [here](#) to donate. Click [here](#) for further details. Slainte!

## **Voices in Action Updates**

We hope you continue to visit the web pages for the Teams who are working on the Voices in Action campaign—and that you keep looking for opportunities to get involved.

The Child Protection and Support Survivors Team, for example, has posted some information about activities suitable for individuals and groups to pursue during April's Child Protection Month. (Read more about their work below, in this week's *Vineyard*.)

The Spiritual & Communal Growth Team has just added a thought-provoking Stations of the Cross to their web pages. You may want to check some of their other offerings on those pages—each description of prayers and liturgy, for example, includes brief informative notes on history and usage.

As you can see, members participating in Voices in Action have been extremely busy and they are getting ready to roll out even more activities. But we need to know what you think! Your responses to a few short questions will help us as we go forward. Please help out. Here is the link for the survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/326L8ZZ>.

## **Siteseeing**

VOTF President Dan Bartley quoted in following story...

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/19/AR2010031902806\\_2.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/19/AR2010031902806_2.html)

“Blind obedience is itself an abuse of human morality,” say Sr. Joan Chittister in her article for NCR.

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/where-i-stand/divided-loyalties-incredible-situation>

For those of you who would like to listen to the latest religious news, here is a link to Interfaith Voices, a religion news magazine on public radio.

<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Another diocese in Ireland comes to grips with abuse scandal...

<http://www.derryjournal.com/journal/How-many-perpetrators-are-still.6166743.jp>

A German writer ruminates on the effect of the abuse scandal on the German Catholic church

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/23/opinion/23Schneider.html>

Boulder pastor feels he is following Jesus by turning away children of gay couple

<http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/boulder-pastor-says-jesus-turned-some-away>

## **News from Cincinnati VOTF**

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and Cincinnati VOTF has planned many activities to raise awareness. Please make a commitment to get involved. The following are all activities that the local Cincinnati VOTF is encouraging our membership, supporters, friends, family and neighbors to consider. Child Abuse will remain a serious problem unless we take steps to raise awareness and break the silence...

### *Voices in Action:*

April 1 – 30: - Blue is the symbolic color for child abuse awareness--- wear a blue ribbon, decorate a tree with blue ribbons at your home, in your neighborhood, at your workplace or place of worship--- take the time to spread the blue ribbon awareness message.-- "Keep Kids Safe" .

April 2, 2010 (Good Friday):-- Way of the Cross - Way of Justice---- come together with others in the Cincinnati area to pray for justice and healing. It is Good Friday--- a day for prayer and repentance- Gather at Fountain Square - at noon-- wear a blue ribbon and pray for those abused. Questions: call Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center at 579-8547.

April 11, 2010 (Sunday): - Greater Cincinnati VOTF is sponsoring a "Stewards of Children" program at LaRosa's at 2717 Vine, ("Short" Vine at McMillan), near UC. This adult prevention education program is scheduled from 1-4pm in the community room. Call 513-231-5271 to register or email [stewards@votfcincinnati.org](mailto:stewards@votfcincinnati.org)

## **Our Members Raise Their Voices**

Steve Trodden, a member of Coastal Delmarva VOTF, speaks out on behalf of survivors to urge the Catholic Church to end Maryland abuse limitations. Read his letter in Maryland's News Journal.

<http://www.delawareonline.com/article/20100320/OPINION10/3200303/1004/OPINION/Letters+to+the+Editor>

VOTF 's Bill Casey is interviewed by Jaime Romo on Romo's blog Healing and Spirituality.

<http://www.jaimeromo.com/blog/>

*A Lenten Reflection*

From Spiritual and Communal Growth Team

Scripture:

“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Again he bent down and wrote on the ground.

And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders.

So he was left alone with the woman before him.

Then Jesus straightened up and said to her,

“Woman, where are they?

Has no one condemned you?”

She replied, “No one, sir.”

Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you.

Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”

Jn 8:7-11

*Reflection:*

Lord,

Help us remember that the jerk who cut us off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and is rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young man who can't make change correctly is a worried 19-year-old college student, balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester.

Remind us, Lord, that the scary looking bum, begging for money in the same spot every day (who really ought to get a job!) is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slow through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last year that they go shopping together.

Heavenly Father, remind us each day that, of all the gifts you give us, the greatest gift is love. It is not enough to share that love with those we hold dear. Open our hearts not to just those who are close to us, but to all humanity. Let us be slow to judge and quick to forgive, show patience, empathy and love.

- Author Unknown

## Calendar

**The Fairfield University Center** for Catholic Studies and Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport will hold their 8th annual conference on Saturday, March 27th, 2010 from 9:30 am to 4pm at Fairfield University, Oak Room at Barone Campus Center. Dr. Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza of Harvard Divinity School will speak on the conference theme, “The Discipleship of Equals”.

For a registration form and a complete schedule of conference details please consult the VOTF website at [www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org).

The **Boston College Alumni Association** and its partners are holding a day-long conference Saturday, April 10, 2010: *Living the Journey: Spirituality for the Second Half of Life*, featuring Jennie Chin Hansen '70, H'08, president of AARP.

This conference, focused on life after 40, will include experts from the fields of theology, ministry, and health, sharing how the challenges of growing older are being re-defined by faith and service.

<http://www.bc.edu/alumni/association/spirituality/livingthejourney/home.html>

### “The Holy Spirit in Moral Decisions”

In Collaboration with Boston College the North Shore-Seacoast VOTF Affiliate is continuing their Adult Faith Education Programs

On Sunday, April 11, 2010, the Rev. James F. Keenan, S.J., Ph. D., a Founders Professor in Theology at Boston College, will speak about “The Holy Spirit in Moral Decisions.” Using the New Testament and the writings of Thomas Aquinas, we will explore the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they are expressed today. The lecture, followed by discussion and refreshments, will be at St. Pius V Lower Church Hall in Lynn from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. As always, everyone is invited! For further information, call Carl Greenler, 781-690-1307

## Letter to the editor

Does anyone else out there have this concern? Increasingly, in my area, the presence of Regnum Christi is making itself felt. One of the things they are pushing seems to me to be a repeat of the pre-Vatican II setup that produced most of the pedophile priests I have

ever heard of. They claim that they get more priests if boys are home-schooled according to their curriculum and then enter a RC minor seminary at the age of 18. This effectively removes the future priest from contact with even Catholics of different theological stripes and also, most likely, from maturing psychologically. Pedophiles are believed to be men whose sexuality was stunted and therefore fixates on children. Surely this goes totally against the spirit of Vatican II and is potentially dangerous.

Dorothy Carter  
VOTF member