

In the Vineyard March 26

National News

VOTF National Conference to Feature Sr. Joan Chittister and Fr. Tom Reese

Our biannual conference will be in Long Island this year, and we'll be presenting two main speakers: Sr. Joan Chittister, O.S.B., and Fr. Thomas Reese, S.J. **Scheduled for Oct. 30-31, 2009**, the conference will include discussions with these two modern-day prophets as we gather to reflect on the state of our church and how we can be part of the changes that will renew our faith.

The Long Island Voice of the Faithful is hosting the event, to be held at the Huntington Hilton in Melville, Long Island, NY. Registration information will be posted soon.

Furor Over CT Bill 1098

If you have been following the story on our web site (www.votf.org), you know that the recent introduction of a Connecticut bill aimed at changing corporate structures of Roman Catholic parishes led to some unsubstantiated claims in various media outlets. Some writers claimed that VOTF had initiated the legislation, supported the legislation, or sought doctrinal changes within the Church, all without ever asking VOTF if, in fact, we had. We obtained corrections for those misstatements from the more responsible media outlets but you may continue seeing versions of the false reports on the Internet and by writers who are not interested in the facts.

[Click here](#) for more information on former CT Bill 1098 and the reactions of Voice of the Faithful, including our latest press release.

To read the correction that ran in the Hartford Courant

<http://www.courant.com/news/corrections/hc-correction0320.artmar20,0,364749.story>

Correction
March 20, 2009

An op-ed Sunday by Anne Hendershott of The King's College in New York, "Catholic Dissidents Pressing for Liberalization of Church Authority," misstated official positions of Voice of the Faithful, an organization of Catholics that supports victims of clergy abuse and seeks increased lay participation in the church.

Contrary to Ms. Hendershott's claims, VOTF had no role in drafting a bill at the state legislature to change how Catholic corporations are formed. Also, the national VOTF does not advocate for "reducing the power of the Catholic hierarchy, eliminating the requirement for priestly celibacy and supporting the ordination of women," as Ms. Hendershott claimed, although the organization has called for debate on the celibacy question and on the role of women in church ministry and governance.

The Courant regrets the errors.

Wisconsin Lay Minister Terminated by Bishop

Submitted by Jim Beyers

The powerlessness of parish employees was again demonstrated on March 12, 2009, when Ruth Kolpack, Pastoral Associate at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Beloit, Wisconsin, was fired by Robert Morlino, Bishop of Madison. Kolpack, active in her parish for 35 years and an employee since 1995, was given only 10 minutes with Bishop Morlino before the termination.

To read more

Wisconsin Lay Minister Terminated by Bishop

Submitted by Jim Beyers

Continued...

Kolpack had been the subject of anonymous letters to Morlino complaining that her views are contrary to Church teaching. The cause for termination, however, was Kolpack's refusal, at the meeting with the bishop, to recant her St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, M Div thesis (2003), titled "Inclusive Language for Naming God: Challenge for the Church." There was no discussion of the anonymous letters. Bishop Morlino had earlier asked her Pastor, Fr. Steve Kortendick, to fire Kolpack and Kortendick reportedly refused.

In protest against the dismissal, members of VOTF and Call to Action demonstrated outside a meeting being held by Bishop Morlino on Saturday, March 14. Morlino was confronted by the group and said only, "You do not have the full story." He later made statements that cast doubt on Kolpack's good character. A representative of the Diocese told the *National Catholic Reporter* that he cannot disclose the reason for the firing, "out of respect for the dignity and good reputation of every person involved".

National Catholic Reporter wrote about the story and also contains a link to Kolpack's thesis.

<http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/free-god-language-fired-parish-workers-thesis>

International News

Irish Bishop Steps Down

Bishop John Magee, who found himself in the center of controversy over his handling clergy sex abuse allegations in the Diocese of Cloyne, has stepped aside. Pope Benedict has appointed Archbishop Dermot Clifford to assume the powers and duties of the Archdiocese. [Voice of the Faithful in Ireland](#) and the United States hope these events will mark the beginning of a new era of accountability.

Read the VOTF press release on the departure of Bishop Magee of Cloyne.

The Irish Times credits VOTF with keeping pressure on in Ireland

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/0316/1224242907205.html>

News from the Affiliates

Progress in Cincinnati

Submitted by Dick Okenfuss, Secretary, Cincinnati VOTF

The Cincinnati area VOTF has been active in several aspects of Child Protection. After the furor that resulted last fall from the revision of the Child Protection Program in the Cleveland, Ohio Diocese, we were asked to comment on the revision proposed for the Cincinnati Archdiocese. A team reviewed the document in detail and we submitted it to the Chancellor. A few of our suggestions for better wording of policies regarding reporting and prevention education requirements were accepted. Our suggestions for changes to the membership and workings of the local review board were not.

We also explored various programs for child protection training that we believe are superior to the current program in the archdiocese. We have identified "Stewards of Children" as an excellent program, and at a reasonable cost. "Stewards of Children" was developed by Darkness to Light, a non-profit organization in Charleston, SC. It is available in our area from Care House, a child advocacy center for victims of abuse, located in Dayton, OH. The prevention specialist from Care House has facilitated "Stewards of Children" in one parish in Cincinnati, and in several school and church venues in Dayton. We have established a VOTF subcommittee that is implementing this initiative to bring "Stewards of Children" into our local parish communities. We have three members scheduled to complete training as facilitators this spring. We are looking for donations to cover at least part of the cost of the handbooks, and applied to the Archdiocesan Family Life Office for a grant. We did not get it, but they did encourage us to apply again next year.

Heated Debate Over Statute of Limitations Legislation in New York

NY is currently in the midst of a heated debate over an amendment to the Statute of Limitations. This amendment would extend the criminal and civil statute of limitations for child sex abuse by five years. It also would open a one-year window of opportunity for child sex abuse victims to go to court even if their statute of limitations already had expired. Many Catholic Bishops seek to deny this legislation.

VOTF president Dan Bartley, and a member of the Long Island affiliate, submitted the following letter to NY *Newsday* supporting the legislation.

Catholic bishops on wrong side of NY State legislation

As reported in a recent *Newsday* article, Roman Catholic bishops and leaders of other faiths are lobbying furiously to defeat the pending NY state legislation amending the Statute of Limitations.

Their primary focus is on the provision that creates a one-year window during which victims, who are currently barred from bringing a civil action, would be permitted to bring suit seeking compensation for their injuries.

The bishops and their allies argue that the bill would bankrupt their dioceses and make defense of old claims difficult to mount. They also claim that the bill unfairly targets religious institutions because public institutions such as the school system are insulated from the “window” provision by other laws not affected by the legislation.

Their opposition should be rejected.

First, the bill does not exempt any institution; the fact that the public school system may presently escape accountability because of other laws is no reason to deny that accountability to others.

Second, the bankruptcy argument ignores the substantial contingent surpluses in some dioceses, not to mention the irony that it was some bishops who covered up the very crimes that they or fellow bishops now seek to keep repressed. (Two states have enacted window legislation. The California experience exposed 300 previously unknown predators).

Third, there are sound reasons for the Statute of Limitations but society has concluded that the statute should not be available to the perpetrators of particularly heinous crimes such as murder, kidnapping and rape. Surely this category fits the sexual abuse of an innocent child who has often suffered devastating and irreparable pain. Some have lived lives of torment; some have committed suicide. To deny justice to these victims of “soul murder” is indefensible.

And surely this ought to be in the forefront of our bishops who have been admonished by our Lord that “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, he be cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” [Luke 17:2].

Sadly, we see once again a hierarchy that favors institutional needs over those who have been victimized by the institution.

The New York Legislature has a long, proud history of enlightened leadership on critical social issues—especially involving children. It is time for the Legislature to take a comprehensive approach to exposing and preventing child sexual abuse. We encourage all Catholics to urge their legislators to vote for mercy, for justice and for the safety of our children, past, present and future.

Dan Bartley, President
Voice of the Faithful

Marci Hamilton, the Paul R. Verkuil Chair in Public Law at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law and a columnist for FindLaw, wrote the following article on the NY legislation:

“Civil Liberties” and Uncivil Lies: What the New York Civil Liberties Union and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights Have in Common – An Agenda to Keep Child Predator Identities Secret”

To read the article:

<http://writ.news.findlaw.com/hamilton/20090319.html>

The following letter supporting the legislation came from VOTF member Carolyn Disco and appeared on the *New York Times* website

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/nyregion/12abuse.html?_r=2 (article)

To read the letter,

March 11th, 2009 11:59 pm

Statutes of limitation are really perpetrator protection statutes. Filing a civil lawsuit is the only way to publicly name an abuser after criminal prosecutions are no longer possible. In California, 300 additional molesters were identified after window legislation passed there.

Children will be safer and past victims will have access to justice if this legislation passes. Three, seven, ten years to come forward is utterly unrealistic. Most survivors do so at the earliest in their mid-40's because of intense shame and trauma. It is past time to stop shutting the courtroom door in their faces.

Entities that covered up abuse and failed to report crimes must be held accountable. And bankruptcies filed by other Catholic dioceses were really last minute measures to avoid trials where documents would be released in open court.

Settlements will be paid anyhow. The pattern though has been to pay whatever is necessary to keep bishops off the stand under oath. The evidence is that incriminating.

Why should religious leaders be rewarded for their ability to keep the secrets until after liability expired? Survivors deserve their chance to learn the truth.

Carolyn Disco, Merrimack NH

END LINK

And finally, to read a heartfelt letter from a survivor that was sent to New York's Newsday and is reprinted with permission,

Wake up Newsday! How about writing about the real “powerful impact”. I am shocked that you've fallen prey to the scare tactics of Bishop Murphy and his puppet “Catholic League”. This bill before congress is not designed to bankrupt the Catholic Church, nor is it a “church sex abuse law” as Bart Jones so poorly reports. It is “The Child Victims

Act” and is designed to protect ALL children from adult sexual predators and hold them accountable.

The powerful impact would actually be the fact that the Rockville Centre Diocese would be forced to disclose the personnel files of my abuser Fr. Gene Vollmer. The powerful impact would be that they would be exposed for their knowledge of his (and others) sex crimes and their deliberate failure to report and protect the Catholic Children who were his victims. The powerful impact on my life is the real story here Newsday! I have suffered failed careers, failed relationships, drug addiction and two suicide attempts – how’s that for impact?

This bill (soon to be law) is NOT about the money! Please stop being lulled to sleep by the Catholic League! This bill is about justice for the real victims. If bankruptcy happens it will be because of their own failures. Since when has an offender’s potential consequences been an argument against justice? I am disappointed in you – I thought you knew better.

Dave McGuire
NY

Site Seeing

National Catholic Reporter’s Joe Feuerherd exposes hypocrisy in the Cardinal Newman Society in Catholic academic ayatollah shows true colors -- Cardinal Newman Society uses McCarthyite tactics to promote a fundamentalist agenda
<http://ncronline.org/news/politics/catholic-academic-ayatollah-shows-true-colors>

“The Church’s new age of dissent” by Marco Politi discusses the challenges the Pope is facing following the reversal of recent decisions.
<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/12833>

How sharing fish Friday brings together all different types of Catholics
<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/religion/post/2009/03/64497201/1>

A federal court of appeals raises the hopes of clergy sex abuse victims nationwide this week as a ruling allows an Oregon man to take steps to pursue a civil lawsuit against the Holy See. The lawsuit seeks money damages for “personal injury in this country caused by the deliberate act of an official or employee of a foreign state while acting within the scope of his office or employment.” According to the judge this makes a case for liability of the Holy See.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nation/bal-te.t6vatican05mar05,0,4725649.story>

Calendar

Bridgeport Area VOTF 's conference "Do This in Memory of Me: The Future of the Eucharist" will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2009, at Fairfield University. The conference will begin at 9:30am with registration and close at 4:00pm with a liturgy of reconciliation, "Healing the Wound in the Body of Christ."

For more information

Bridgeport VOTF Conference

Saturday, March 28, 2009

Featured speakers will be noted liturgist, John Baldovin, S.J. from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology speaking on: *The Eucharist at the Center of the Christian Mission* and Ann Riggs, Ph.D., of Rivier College, whose title is *Women and the Eucharist; Can the Body of Christ be Female?*

Two afternoon panels, *A Changing Laity's Perspective*, and *Next Gen Speaks*, featuring groups of students and young people, will shed light on Catholic thinking on the Future of the Eucharist.

Everyone concerned about the future of the Eucharist in our changing Church is invited to attend. The registration fee is \$35.00, which includes a box lunch. Schedule details and a registration form can be found at <http://www.votfbpt.org>

Save the Date – A VOTF Conference will be held October 30-31 2009 at the Huntington Hilton in Melville, Long Island, NY. The speakers will be Sr. Joan Chittister, O.S.B. and Fr. Thomas Reese, S.J.

For more information

VOTF Conference

"MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD"

featuring SR. JOAN CHITTISTER, O.S.B. and FR. THOMAS REESE, S.J.

Voice of the Faithful invites you to a unique national conference on Long Island this fall!

Two contemporary prophets—Sr. Joan Chittister and Fr. Tom Reese—will lead us in "Making Our Voices Heard." Join in lively discussions with our esteemed speakers as we come together to reflect on the state of our church and how we can be part of the changes that will renew our faith.

Pray together as one voice, learn about VOTF's current strategic plan, participate in stimulating conversations, catch up with old friends and make some new ones as we convene some of the most active and committed Catholics in our area to "make our voices heard."

We will have registration details soon, but for now

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

OCTOBER 30-31 2009

Huntington Hilton, Melville, Long Island

Hosted by Long Island –Voice of the Faithful

Scituate Affiliate of Voice of the Faithful

Thursday, April 2, 7:00-9:00 p.m.; The Scituate Affiliate of Voice of the Faithful invites you to a talk by Ronald DuBois, Ph.D. entitled "THE EUCHARIST: ORIGINS IN JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN PRACTICE". For directions: <http://www.stmaryscituate.org/directions/>. Location: Saint Mary of the Nativity Parish Hall, 1 Kent Street, Scituate Harbor, MA. The hall is across the street from the church. For more information,

Scituate Affiliate of Voice of the Faithful

Thursday, April 2, 7:00-9:00 p.m.; The Starting with early stories of the Eucharist, Ron will trace some of the history that has led to the Eucharistic services we have today. He will also look at some of the ancient Jewish practices of Shabbat and Synagogue worship that were a part of Jesus' history. The conclusions Ron draws may lead to a deeper, more reverent celebration of the Eucharist by contemporary Christians. Ron holds a Master's degree in Theology from Maryknoll Seminary in New York and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from St. Louis University. He is an elected member of National Representative Council and the Board of Trustees of Voice of the Faithful as well as a member of The Paulist Center in Boston. Join us for an interesting evening! For directions: <http://www.stmaryscituate.org/directions/>. Location: Saint Mary of the Nativity Parish Hall, 1 Kent Street, Scituate Harbor, MA. The hall is across the street from the church.

Falmouth VOTF Affiliate

Sunday, April 26, 2:00-4:00 p.m., presents JAMES CARROLL, author of "PRACTICING CATHOLIC". Location: Morse Pond School, 323 Jones Road, Falmouth, MA. For more information or for questions, call Anne Hart at 508-457-7565.

Carroll's new book is a portrayal of American Catholicism during his lifetime. Carroll deals at length with Vatican II, the struggle to confront anti-Semitism in the church, the various issues concerned with sexuality and gender, why he became a priest and why he resigned holy orders, the sexual abuse scandal and its attempted cover-up by diocesan authorities, and the role of the church in global issues.

For more information,

Falmouth VOTF Affiliate

Sunday, April 26, 2:00-4:00 p.m., presents JAMES CARROLL, author of "PRACTICING CATHOLIC". Location: Morse Pond School, 323 Jones Road, Falmouth, MA. For more information or for questions, call Anne Hart at 508-457-7565. Carroll concludes with a chapter about the religious life and the practice of the vocation of being a writer. "Practicing Catholic" has a publication date of April 2 and should be in bookstores for sale by then or even slightly earlier. Mr. Carroll is a well known author of such books as "American Requiem" and "Constantine's Sword". He is also a contributor of the op-ed page of the Boston Globe.

Please; note location: Morse Pond School, 323 Jones Road, Falmouth, MA. For more information or for questions, call Anne Hart at 508-457-7565.

Theater Review

A Review of Richard N. Goodwin's "Two Men of Florence"

Submitted by Patricia McCarron

Richard N. Goodwin is one of Boston's own, so, when, on Tuesday, March 10th, at the Huntington Theatre, Voice of the Faithful presented a dual opportunity, to view Goodwin's play, "Two Men of Florence," and meet the playwright himself, in a prior question and answer forum, it was an exciting prospect. Predictably, Goodwin's electrifying persona paved the way for theatre goers to build up a stirring sense of what was to come. They were not disappointed.

To read the rest of Patricia's review

A Review of Richard N. Goodwin's "Two Men of Florence"

Submitted by Patricia McCarron

...continued

Scenic and Costume Designer Francis O'Connor uses an intricate and alternating array of candles and lights on all sides and above the stage to denote in like terms both subjects of the play: the universe and the universal God. At center-stage Goodwin has placed his subjects on a rotating circular disc, which he cleverly uses to transport the audience to and from the laboratory of mathematician, Galileo Galilei, where he animatedly, and in hermeneutical terms not unlike those of his antagonist, Pope Urban VIII, explains his experimentation with motion to his contemporaries and most proudly to his daughter, a profound religious, who generously returns her father's love and validates his genius. To suggest her engagement from a distance, when not in her father's laboratory, she moves about on the stationary periphery of Goodwin's rotating set, listening intently, and, like her father, surrenders life to faith. Against the backdrop of Galileo's claim of the earth's rotation around the sun, the rotating set becomes a metaphor for the storyline's span over decades, as Galileo Galilei (Jay O. Sanders), a father of modern science, and Pope Urban VIII (Peter Van Wagner), the vicar of Christ, play out the spectacle of their conflicting vocations, as they evolved (pardon the pun) up to and through the time in 1632, when Galileo published his book, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief Systems of the World*.

Through Goodwin's impartial and stunning mind's eye and skillfully crafted dialogue, we vividly witness, as the bond of friendship between then Cardinal Bellarmine and Galileo disintegrates into a tragic collision of science and religion, as it plays out in a world over which both hold strong influence. While Sanders' deep portrayal of the piously Catholic Galileo evokes his suffering in being at odds with the church he loves, Van Wagner's powerful depiction of Pope Urban VIII brings sympathy to his ecclesial character as Vicar of Christ, even as special effects lighting unambiguously displays the imperial power that he wields with impunity. Molly Schreiber's role as Galileo's daughter, Maria Celeste, stands in sharp contrast to those of Sanders and Van Wagner, as she deftly conveys the sublime humility of her character: We're not sure how, but she appears to float above the surface of it all, and poignantly embodies the simple nature and divine grace of dutiful nun and beloved daughter of her controversial father. A splendid array of actors and actresses in supporting roles energized and ignited this story, as told by

Goodwin's imaginative genius, as both sides of the argument prepare the case and react to the verdict of the Inquisition. Ever considerate of his audience, throughout the story, Goodwin lightens the load, effectively using caricature, wit and humor to display the very human foolishness of his renowned characters and their contemporaries, and as an anecdote to the magnitude of the issues at stake. The satirical sycophants surrounding both mathematician and pope cleverly allude to society's ever present need of supermen, and its willingness to overlook the obvious to legitimize their want.

For Voice of the Faithful members, "Two Men of Florence" is timely, because it evokes for today's Catholics the struggle to live out the faith Jesus gave us, as opposed to the "faith" the institution would have us blindly accept, while Pope Benedict XVI, although often mired in controversy, challenges modernity, even in the wake of a worldwide ongoing sexual abuse crisis in the church he leads.

As the play progresses we become aware of the differences: Unencumbered by television and the ubiquitous media, Pope Urban VIII wielded the Inquisition against Galileo's ingenuous breakthrough with impunity, whereas Pope Benedict's errors of judgment receive global scrutiny, revealing to today's people of God the chink in the armor of absolute authority. Especially in this era, this playwright is a catalyst: We leave the theatre with many questions and considerations, and the knowledge that contemporary struggles are a fresh opening to revisit outcomes limited by the culture and knowledge of their day, albeit with the reality of our own limits.

My only disappointments with the show were: In this very age of technology, Goodwin was deprived of a microphone during the preliminary question and answer period, which resulted in people sitting at a distance shouting for him to speak louder, and, obviously, the missing microphone became an offense to both playwright and audience. Secondly, from our balcony seats it seemed that some of the cast's voices bounced off the vaulted ceiling of the Huntington, giving a hollow sound to the player's well spoken lines. But this would be true in any of Boston's vintage theatres. (I may see the play a second time, if orchestra seats are available!) Third, a promised post performance visit by the cast to VOTF members in attendance at a post performance reception never materialized. Either the promise was carelessly given or the cast did not value our participation enough to keep it. Either way, it was a disappointment to an otherwise delightful experience.

Questions, Comments?

Please send them to Siobhan Carroll, Vineyard Editor at Vineyard@votf.org. Unless otherwise indicated, I will assume comments can be published as Letters to the Editor.