

In the Vineyard November 19

News from National

VOTF Member Survey, Part II

Last Spring, Voice of the Faithful began conducting a member survey in which we asked for feedback on how VOTF was doing in terms of living up to our potential as a voice for change within the Catholic Church.

In the last issue of *In the Vineyard*, we presented strengths and weaknesses of VOTF that came out of that survey. In this issue, we will discuss the criteria we used to filter through the many responses received. Most importantly, Part II contains what emerged as VOTF's core values. The next issue of *In the Vineyard* will contain the final installment of VOTF's strategic plan.

Part II of VOTF's Strategic Plan

As we gathered data for the Strategic Plan, we established guiding principles to help us filter through the vast amount of data we received. Our guiding principles became the criteria to determine which suggestions we embraced and in which priority. We kept those suggestions that we felt were:

- Consistent and supportive of VOTF's Mission, Goals and Identity Statement. All elements selected directly or indirectly support the mission and dovetail with our national goals to further support our identity statement.
- Consistent with the findings of the many SWOT analysis surveys across our membership. Sorting the data was a laborious task, but we grouped like-minded statements that supported one another so that we had clarity and critical mass.
- Consistent with our core values. Our values define our behavior to all and as an organization, we share:
 - *A deep love for our Church within a Vatican II model,*
 - *A mandate to use our experience and skill to repair the institution with meaningful, responsible reform,*
 - *A need to model respect, collegiality, cooperation, compassion, transparency and accountability in all our interactions.*

With data in categories:

- We determined what was possible and reasonably executable given current resources, and
- Which elements would continue to strengthen the organization from the inside out, with a focus on engaging and energizing the cumulative talent of our members and raising needed funds for the initiatives defined.

Finally, the Plan must be easy to understand, articulate and execute. Recognizing how we gathered the data, filtered it and prioritized the issues is important for our members to understand. We discussed issues at length and worked hard to maintain our stated strengths, diminish our weaknesses, anticipate and prepare for known and unknown opportunities as well as prepare for anticipated or unanticipated threats. Our goal is to build a proactive future.

In the next edition of *In the Vineyard*, we will present the plan to all and invite all to actively and enthusiastically participate.

Today is your Last Day to Win a Turkey!

Today is the last day to donate to Voice of the Faithful and have your name included in our turkey drawing!

Donate \$25 to Voice of the Faithful today and as a thank you, your name will be added to a raffle for a Thanksgiving dinner for 6-10 people. Winners will receive a turkey and sides from Hickory Farms, deliverable in the continental United States. Orders will be guaranteed by provider for a November 27th delivery date.

Your turkey raffle donation will support VOTF's new Strategic Plan– which includes projects for reviewing mandated celibacy, monitoring diocesan pastoral and financial accountability, organizing an American Catholic Council meeting, and much more.

To make your gift online at our website, use this link. Donations must be received by midnight, November 19.

Rebuilding a Ship at Sea: the Challenge of Changing the Church

On November 10, sociologists Dr. Patricia Ewick (Clark University) and Dr. Marc Steinberg (Smith College) presented the preliminary findings of their year long study of the Winchester VOTF to the local Winchester MA affiliate. They wondered, can you be both challenger and faithful?

Sociologists Study VOTF

Drs. Ewick and Steinberg began their presentation at last week's meeting, by explaining that the "norm" in sociology is that "challenger" groups come from outside the institution they seek to change. These groups often see themselves as in opposition to the main group within the institution or that runs the institution. Most such challengers are defined as and are seen as marginal. Dr. Ewick and Dr. Steinberg felt that the fact that VOTF members were the most active and most faithful of Catholics was an anomaly.

When sociologists examine groups set up to challenge authority, they try to see what people share in the way of Vision, and how that changes over time. But the longer they studied Winchester, by attending meetings and observing members, the more their questions changed. "The fact that you stuck around for 6 years in the face of some quite considerable opposition is remarkable," said Dr. Ewick. They continued to hear that the Winchester affiliate is a model in many ways for other affiliates. So their questions also turned to how and why the Winchester affiliate differs from others. Some of their thoughts on what makes the difference:

How is the Winchester Affiliate Different?

Groups who challenge authority and stick around develop a sense of shared identity, a sense of we-ness. In VOTF, there is the sense that "we" are the People of God, we are the

baptized, we share common desires. But still there seems to be something distinctive about the Winchester group beyond this general People of God sense.

- The practice of “we-ness” in this affiliate may be connected to “how you were Catholics before this” and how that helped you establish this we-ness separate from the faith but connected to it. “Participation is at the center of constructing a sense of we-ness.”

Contradictions and Anomalies

Most successful challenger groups begin flexibly but then very often end up looking much like the institution they were trying to reform. The labor movement is a prime example of this. Even the Church itself, which was initially in opposition to the existing institution but then became itself a larger and more bureaucratic one. But in Winchester, as time went on, the group became more participatory and more democratic, avoiding the “hardening of arteries” that can happen.

Ewick and Steinberg felt that the Winchester affiliate has also developed a dialogue method and a way of conflict resolution that helps it steer through the many, very deep divisions that exist among some members. There is the issue over which goal is primary, over the scope of change that should be sought, over issues like celibacy and the women’s issue and whether those should be included in VOTF’s mission. But the group has not dissolved over this. Ewick and Steinberg think this happens because the group itself does not make these differences a zero-sum game. So while there was a division of labor, there also was a division of passion. This division actually can feed cohesion but ONLY as long as everyone respects the others who do not believe the same thing or have the same passion.

VOTF’s Role within the Church

Another anomaly the sociologists saw is VOTF’s role *within* the Church. Most challenger groups come from outside the institution. Or they see themselves as being in opposition to the main group. Many are both defined by others and see themselves as marginal. But VOTF members are distinctive for being highly involved in their Church and parish. VOTF members are among the MOST faithful Catholics. They are the MOST active parishioners. And they cherish their personal identities as Catholics, as mainstream Catholics. So the most faithful, the most active members of a group have become the most vocal members challenging the Church.

And the resolution of this apparent conflict is that the love of the Church leads to the need to “fix” it and make it better. VOTF members have a profound feeling that something needs to change.

The Change within Ourselves

The third anomaly is that although VOTF *has* achieved some change in the Church, the greatest change has been in VOTF members *themselves*. For many, being in VOTF has changed what they think it means to BE an adult Catholic in the Church.

And, according to Dr. Ewick, “It may be that change in yourself *IS* the way you change your Church.”

“Six years is a remarkably long period of time for a challenging group to survive. And sociologically, the more you can simply endure, the more recognized you become – the more the institution makes note of your presence,” said Dr. Steinberg.

Dr. Ewick, finished the presentation by comparing the work VOTF members are undertaking to rebuilding a ship at sea – using the existing planks, but not dismantling the structure in order to keep the ship afloat. Can VOTF continue to be both CHALLENGER and FAITHFUL? “It’s obvious that none of you want to capsize this boat or put it in dry-dock. You want to change it but you want it to keep sailing at the same time,” she concluded.

Thought from Prayerful Voice

This Thanksgiving remember to give thanks for all the priests and religious who remain faithful to their vows and promises.

News from Affiliates

The Chicagoland Voice of the Faithful recently sent a letter to former principal, Barbara Westrick, commending her on her work protecting children. Barbara Westrick was the Principal of Our Lady of the Westside who was fired from her job several months after warning the Chicago Archdiocese about sexual abuse allegations from one of her students against Father Daniel McCormack (currently serving jail time for pedophilia). Despite working as a Catholic school principal in Ohio and Illinois for her entire career, Barbara now finds herself without a job.

Site Seeing

Illinois VOTF affiliate demands action over Priest allowed back with children after settling out of court.

http://www.southcountytimes.com/Articles-i-2008-11-14-82608.113117_Catholic_Groups_Decry_Fr_Osbornes_St_Peter_Duties.html

NY Times write Peter Steinfels wonders if the big losers in the last election were Roman Catholic Bishops

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/08/us/politics/08beliefs.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Bishops urged to confront Obama over social issues

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/11/us/politics/11bishops.html>

The Audacity of Hope or a Fool’s Errand:

The Criminal Prosecution of Cardinal Francis George and/or the Archdiocese of Chicago

The following was submitted by Carolyn Disco, survivor support chairman for NH Voice of the Faithful since 2002. Disco was involved until this year in the national Survivor

Support Working Group. She holds strongly to the need to hold Cardinal Francis George accountable for a record of negligence, arrogance and dissembling about the sexual abuse of minors under his care. Unfortunately, she feels the only consequence to date has been his election to high office.

How is it that a cardinal archbishop of Chicago can get away with acknowledging,

- that he never reported allegations of sexual abuse of minors, something required by Illinois law;
- that he rejected the recommendations of his own Review Board in 2005 to remove a priest from ministry, and that more children were abused as a result;
- that he knew of five allegations against another priest since 2002 and did not remove him from service until 2006;
- that he secretly waged a six-year effort through 2002 for the early release from prison of a convicted child molester;
- that he welcomed an admitted felon to live at his mansion in 2003, indicated when the matter was disclosed publicly that the abuser would not work in Chicago again,
- but in violation of his word the molester attended meetings on seven occasions in 2007-8 in an archdiocesan building adjacent to a Chicago elementary school?

Behavior may have consequences for Catholics in the pews, but apparently the only outcome for Cardinal Francis George for enabling sexual abuse is the honor of being elected president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) last year. Such is the quagmire of episcopal arrogance and neglect in these times.

Documents make clear that George countenanced an atmosphere of surreal, appalling negligence, where protecting children was simply not an urgent priority. To know what George and his aides really believed, look not at what they said, but at what they did: hairsplitting rationalizations for failure to follow through by asking basic questions about priests' records, turning "don't ask, don't tell" into an art form; advising a perpetrator how to mislead survivors and their attorneys, crafting hyper-distinctions about abuse in seminary versus post ordination, and so forth. Reading George's testimony is painful, but highly instructive about a cardinal's mindset.

Following up on the request for VOTF members to write the Cook County State Attorney's office about the criminal prosecution of George, I sent a letter noting George's admission in deposition of his failure to report :

Q. "Cardinal, in your 48 years as a priest, have you ever personally or at your direction made a report of suspected sexual abuse of a minor to civil authorities?"

A. "No"

I also noted criminal violations of failure to report in the independent Defenbaugh audit George authorized:

- "This (1999) allegation was not reported by Archdiocesan personnel...to local law enforcement as required by law."
- "Not one of these allegations or suspicious activities (October 1999-December 2005) was brought to the attention of ... the State's Attorney"

- Five additional references to failure to report under the law are seen throughout the audit.

Defenbaugh found that numerous archdiocesan personnel did not follow their own policy and procedures e.g., delays in telling George about allegations, and administrative checklists left unused for years.

My letter referred to the cases of Rev. Joseph Bennett and Rev. Daniel McCormack alluded to above, as well as the prosecution of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for failure to report, and the state attorney general investigation of the Diocese of Manchester, NH for child endangerment. There is precedent for legal remedy.

Were the allegations brought to the Archdiocese against Bennett over four years from 2002 forward reported by George or the Archdiocese to the authorities? George had ignored a Review Board recommendation to remove Bennett in both October and November 2005. Or because the abuse occurred more than three years before (the statute of limitations), could George claim there was no need to report “immediately” when he learned of the allegations earlier this decade?

The reply to my letter from the communications director at the Attorney’s office was a cryptic non-answer that mentioned only McCormack’s case. Here is the entire text: “Father Daniel McCormick [sic] was charged with molesting five young children following an extensive joint investigation between our office and the Chicago Police Department. He was subsequently convicted and sentenced last year to five years in prison. As part of that investigation, we did not uncover evidence to support charges against others.

Should additional information be forthcoming, we would follow that evidence wherever it would lead us. To address questions about why we did not charge particular individuals would be inappropriate and prohibited by the Illinois Supreme Court rules that govern how we deal with public information. “

We seek answers that assure investigations were completed about everyone involved in all cases; that certain issues were explored thoroughly, not why charges were never brought. One does not have evidence to be sanguine in this regard. Or have bishops just kept secrets so well that they escape accountability under the law?

The Defenbaugh audit recommended that violations of the reporting law be presented to the State’s Attorney for prosecutive opinion, and noted the three year statute of limitations. There is reference to discussion on the matter with the State’s Attorney on 7/5/06, confirmed by a letter, though I could not locate it.

This text in the Illinois Compiled Statutes is the only section on a three-year statute of limitations I could find:

“(i) Except as otherwise provided in subdivision (j), a prosecution for criminal sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual assault, or aggravated criminal sexual abuse may be commenced within 10 years of the commission of the offense if the victim reported the

offense to law enforcement authorities within 3 years after the commission of the offense.”

Nothing in this subdivision (i) shall be construed to shorten a period within which a prosecution must be commenced under any other provision of this Section. It gets to the point of needing an attorney to decipher the legalese and formats on state websites. Volunteers accepted.

However, there is an intriguing possibility that may bring hope. The very next paragraph in the statute reads:

“(j) When the victim is under 18 years of age at the time of the offense, a prosecution for criminal sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual assault, predatory criminal sexual assault of a child, or aggravated criminal sexual abuse or a prosecution for failure of a person who is required to report an alleged or suspected commission of any of these offenses under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act may be commenced within 20 years after the child victim attains 18 years of age. “

Victims of Daniel McCormack are a long way from 38 years old, though Bennett’s victims appear to be over that age. There is a comprehensive, invaluable link to George’s deposition with documents, photos, and explanatory notes at www.BishopAccountability.org. You may need to go to their home page first in order to access it at http://www.bishop-accountability.org/depo/2008_01_30_Cardinal_Francis_George/

Whereas a criminal prosecution of the perpetrator in paragraph (i) specifies action within three years of the assault itself, a criminal prosecution in paragraph (j) includes the one failing to report as liable to action, and makes no mention of a three-year limit --- if that is a correct interpretation.

It is necessary to read the original documents and sort out George’s tortured answers to discern the victims’ histories, and what George and other personnel knew when. Given the many statements by Defenbaugh and George’s admission about not reporting allegations, maybe there are cases still to be presented to prosecutors. It takes doing the grunt work yourself, and getting the media to focus. All earlier approaches to them were fruitless. Essentially, they do not have time for the painstaking research.

A Notre Dame law professor says that prosecutors are not immune from public pressure, so maybe this is worth the effort, instead of a fool’s errand. Bear in mind that the Archdiocese of Chicago is organized as a corporation sole, meaning for all legal intents and purposes, George is the Archdiocese. That means George should still be in the docket if the Archdiocese is charged instead of an individual, and justifiably so. In 2003, Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk plead no contest to the Archdiocese’s failure to report, and paid a \$10,000 fine. He admitted facts that constituted guilt, according to the judge, and Pilarczyk agreed. Same issues, same modus operandi as in Chicago (and every diocese).

May justice roll down like the mighty waters again. And the salutary effect of the head of the USCCB in the same position as Pilarczyk is worth pondering.

¹ http://www.bishop-accountability.org/depo/2008_01_30_Cardinal_Francis_George/2008_01_30_Cardinal_Francis_George_arch_000_050.pdf pdf p. 39, hard copy p. 38, lines 17-21

¹ http://www.archchicago.org/c_s_abuse/report_032006/defenbaugh_full_report.pdf
p. 24 (also p. 1, 21, 22, 38, 30)

¹ <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=072000050HArt%2E+3&ActID=1876&ChapAct=720%26nbsp%3BILCS%26nbsp%3B5%2F&ChapterID=53&ChapterName=CRIMINAL+OFFENSES&SectionID=60572&SeqStart=4700000&SeqEnd=5600000&ActName=Criminal+Code+of+1961%2E> 720 ILCS 5/3-6)
(from Ch. 38, par. 3-6)

¹ Ibid. (extended from 10 to 20 years in 2003 as part of Public Act 93-356)

¹ http://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2003_07_12/2003_11_21_Sloat_CincinnatiArchdiocese.htm

Thinking About Christmas Shopping?

If you plan to do any online shopping at Amazon.com, please go to the VOTF website first and access Amazon through VOTF. Amazon.com will then donate a small percentage of whatever you buy (including gift certificates!) to VOTF. You won't be charged any extra and VOTF will be able to raise some money! Please visit <http://www.votf.org/amazon/>

As always, thank you for your support – both spiritual and financial!

Letters to the Editor

I see many good things happening for the future church. Most of it by the small “c” catholic church, the People of God. It seems that the synod of bishops should be more open to dialogue with those who have come from afar to contribute. Lack of dialogue limits the opportunities for the Holy Spirit's voice and actions. I tend to agree with Andrew Greeley's article in the August "Commonweal". It will be a 100 years before there is significant change. The structure can't openly accept change so it will come despite the structure. Thanks to VOTF for being a catalyst for the change.

Charlie Young
Bend, OR

Everywhere there is conversation on “Accountability” and “Transparency”. For good reason, people are hungry for open and fair systems of governance in our institutions especially in our church, our representative government; and yes also, within healthcare, military procurement, and immigration policies to name more. The self serving “insider” can function best within secrecy and obscurity. Systematic abuse of any type,

can thrive best within bureaucratic moats or walls. Please keep up your valiant efforts with the *Vineyard* to be a voice for change/conversion of the faithful in our Church. Accountability and Transparency in the Church is not just for us in the church but is the beacon of light that precedes Civil change. If we want a better world then we must fight for just, moral, clear & responsible change that sponsors the Kingdom of God on earth.

Sincerely, Tim Brennan
North Carolina

Book Corner

The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism (Hardcover)
by Richard P. McBrien (Author) HarperOne (September 2, 2008)
submitted by Gaile Pohlhaus

Although this book promises a history it focuses intensely on the Second Council of the Vatican. The thirty pages devoted to the development of the Church give the reader the background and the scope to follow the directions of the Council. McBrien is, as always, lucid in style and careful with facts. This book would make an excellent Christmas present for persons seriously interested in the Catholic Church and its expressions throughout the world. It is available on Amazon so don't forget to order it through www.VOTF.Org/Amazon.

VOTF Looking for Web Marketing Geniuses!

We're looking for volunteers who want to use their web 2.0 skills to help Voice of the Faithful change the Catholic Church. If you (or a son, daughter, grandchild or friend) has the knowledge to put together the kinds of online tools and campaigns we see now from political campaigns and online marketers, please contact us. We've got the opportunity of a lifetime for you.

People with knowledge and experience with social networking applications, search engine optimization, buying online advertising, developing Facebook pages, and devising campaigns using YouTube, email, text-messaging and a host of other low-cost online techniques are all being sought. Our goal is to put together a team of high-tech and web-marketing volunteers who will work together with other VOTF members and staff to mobilize more and more people for bringing about change we can believe in – in the Catholic Church.

Our ultimate goals are to bring about greater accountability and financial transparency in parishes and dioceses; to support survivors of the clergy sexual abuse scandal and protect children from abuse in the future; to educate the laity about their rights and responsibilities; and to encourage greater lay involvement in the management of the Church through such potential changes as the election of bishops by the laity or making celibacy optional for priests.

If any of these issues interests you – or if you'd just like to see if your web organizing skills can change a 2000-year-old institution for the better – please send a resume and brief note describing your skills and interests to webmaster@votf.org.

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.