

October 8 In the Vineyard

NATIONAL NEWS

Bartley Speaks at Winchester VOTF

VOTF President Dan Bartley spoke on Monday, October 6, at the weekly Winchester MA VOTF meeting. Dan spoke about where VOTF is now and the challenges and opportunities the organization faces going forward. Dan also spoke about the leadership and membership surveys VOTF has been conducting and how the information being collected will be reflected in VOTF's strategic plan. In November Dan is scheduled to speak in Bridgeport CT at another VOTF affiliate meeting.

New Degree in Church Management Offered By Boston College

In response to the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, bishops and pastoral administrators are recognizing the necessity at various levels of church administration for lay and ordained personnel educated in the arts of business administration and knowledgeable in the areas of Catholic theology, ecclesiology and policy, and social teaching. Boston College is meeting that need with a new degree program.

“Essentially I started this program because the Church is clearly in need of better management,” said Dr. Thomas Groome, Chair of the Institute of Religious and Pastoral Ministry, now a Department within Boston College's new School of Theology and Ministry. “(There were) many causes to the clergy sex abuse scandal but a prime one was bad management - of personnel and resources.” Read more ...

New Church Management Degree at Boston College = head on linked page

Boston College's joint degree program in Pastoral Ministry and Business Administration currently has over 20 people enrolled. Students take classes from the Carroll School of Management as well as the Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (IREPM). The degree program has attracted students interested in careers in the management and administration of churches as well as dioceses, hospitals, and social service agencies.

According to Dr. Groome, “There are generous scholarships and tuition remission available- especially for people from all of the New England dioceses.”

For more information on BC's program go to
<http://www.bc.edu/schools/stm/irepm/academics/degrees/masters/ma-mba.html>.

SITE SEEING

Boston Archdiocese Reviewing Financial Relationship with Parishes

According to a recent report in the diocesan newspaper, Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley is considering a change in the way the Archdiocese collects funds from its parishes. This new proposal would eliminate all fees and taxes charged by the archdiocese -- including the cathedraticum -- as well as the two annual collections currently devoted to the central administration. It would replace them with a new model for the Catholic Appeal and a single parish tithe to the archdiocese. For details....

<http://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.asp?ID=7005>

David Gibson on VOTF's Call to Review Mandated Celibacy

Award winning religion writer David Gibson comments on VOTF's recent letter to Cardinal Sean O'Malley, which asked for a review of mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests.

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/pontifications/2008/09/questioning-celibacy-votf-call.html>

Cardinal George in Kerry Kennedy's New Book

Justice Anne M. Burke, an Illinois Supreme Court justice who chaired the National Review Board for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops from 2002 to 2004, a lay review board investigating the Catholic sex abuse scandal, blasts the church and prominent cardinals in Kerry Kennedy's new book, accusing them of dishonesty.

In Kennedy's book, *Being Catholic Now*, Justice Burke says, "Bishops got away with concealing crime" and singles out Cardinal Francis George of Chicago. She later tempered her remarks, saying that the interview with Kennedy happened a year ago and that she appreciates his more recent actions.

To read more, <http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1822>

Calendar

Open Visions Forum at Fairfield University

October 18 - 9:30am to 12:00noon

"Women in the Church: Where Are We Now?"

Panel discussion

To purchase tickets, call the Regina A. Quick Center Box Office at (203) 254-4010 or toll free 1-877-ARTS-396 (1-877-278-7396)

October 26, 2008

Volusia Voice of the Faithful

Speaker: Marty Zeitz

Marty Zeitz heads the Victim Assistance Ministry for the Tampa-St. Petersburg Diocese, and will address the first full meeting of the 2008-2009 Year of Action for Volusia Voice of the Faithful.

The meeting will be at 3 p.m., Sunday, October 26, at Ormond Beach's Anderson-Price Memorial Building.

AFFILIATE NEWS

Tampa VOTF Views Robinson DVD

The Tampa VOTF recently gathered to view a DVD of Bishop Robinson's talk which he gave on Long Island (available for purchase at: <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=a6545d>) with a lively discussion ensuing. Tampa members also are working alongside state senator Rhonda Storm to seek extensions on the Statute of Limitation on Child Sexual Abuse.

Update from LI's Faith Convention

Long Island VOTF'S 5th annual Faith Convention was held September 13th at the Hilton Hotel in Melville NY. The theme of the conference was "The Emergence of the Laity in the 21st Century". The morning session consisted of a panel with representatives from several other organizations. Leonard Swidler, professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University discussed Church governance during the afternoon session.

To read more about both sessions;

Update from LI's Faith Convention

There was a panel composed of representatives from several other organizations, including: SNAP (David Clohessy), Future Church (Christine Schenk CSJ), Catholic Common Ground (Peter Denio), Call to Action (Bob Heineman), Pax Christi (Bob Keeler) and national VOTF (Dan Bartley). Both The Catholic League and Catholics United for the Faith {CUF} were invited to serve as panelists but did not respond despite repeated efforts to reach them. Two other well-known representatives of the conservative Catholic voice were also invited. Neither responded. The invitation to participate was made so there would be a broad representation of Catholic viewpoints.

The panel was moderated by Paul Tonna, former presiding officer of the Suffolk County legislature and a Catholic activist for the poor.

SWIDLER'S REMARKS AT LI VOTF CONVENTION

In the afternoon, Leonard Swidler discussed Church governance. Many of Swidler's observations can be found in his book "*Making the Church More Our Own.*" Calling for a new constitution for the church, Swidler pointed out that Pope Paul VI called for such a reordering towards the end of his papacy, but the idea was "deep-sixed" by John Paul II. He also severely criticized church leadership for denying the contributions of women.

Swidler distributed the following paper at the LI VOTF convention;

Catholic Reform from Below

10 steps to a constitutional parish and mature self-governance

By Leonard Swidler

In the beginning of the fourth century, the Catholic Church underwent a momentous shift from an "illegitimate" oppressed group of scattered communities to a protected "legitimate" religion, and before the end of that century, as a result of the religious revolution that began in 313 under Constantine, it had become the all-powerful, only legitimate state religion of the Roman Empire.

In the beginning of the 21st century the Catholic Church is teetering on the edge of a similarly momentous shift. All the world today is either solidly on the path of democracy, or is striving to get on it. This is also true of the Catholic church, which moved from condemning democracy and freedom as madness ("deliramentum") in the 19th century to affirming "reform, freedom, dialogue, collegiality" (Vatican II) in the 20th, and is moving toward democratization in the 21st. The current clergy sex scandals are in reality church governance scandals, and all signs point to more church closings, diocesan bankruptcies, confiscation of parish properties and destruction of communities by the time the full effect of the scandal has been felt. At the same time there is a corresponding lay resistance and growing revolt. And not just in America, but around the world.

In the wake of the scandal and more than \$1 billion already paid out, many Catholics are asking themselves: Whatever happened to the Vatican II promise of a collegial church (in plain English, a democratic church)? The response rising up is: Leadership from above cannot be expected; Vatican II reform and renewal must come from below, from the laity, religious and priests.

Here is a 10-step program from below that aims at a parish constitution and the forming of a nonprofit organization, technically called a 501(c)(3). Both components are essential, the former to shape the governance of a mature Catholic community, and the latter to create a financial “field of force,” which will make the parish community -- laity, religious, clergy -- a mature self-governing community integrated into the diocese, national church and universal church.

Step 1: Prepare the minds of the laity to take responsibility

We must first recognize that this is a very uneven struggle against a structure that places almost all the power in one set of hands, the bishop's. Hence, to begin this democratic church movement from below we need to have a pastor and some parish laity of a Vatican II mentality. Then “Father Goodpastor” and the lay leaders need to devise a program to raise the consciousness of the parish to realize that all the members must share the responsibility of making their parish a mature Catholic community. This might take anywhere from six days to six years, and could include many sermons, lecture series, gradual development of parish structures, and many other creative methods. The goal is to get, if not all, at least the great majority of the parish to follow the lead of the pope and all the bishops of the world in Vatican II (1962-65):

All [including the laity] are led to ... wherever necessary; undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform. ... Catholics' ... primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself. ... Christ summons the church, as it goes its pilgrim way, to that continual reformation [emphases added] of which it always has need (Vatican II, “Decree on Ecumenism”).

Step 2: Discuss and deliberate among all members of the parish

Although there obviously must be a smaller cadre of parishioners (pastor and laity) who take the lead, the whole of the parish must be seriously engaged in coming together to discuss, deliberate and ultimately decide what exactly a parish constitution is and what their own constitution should contain. (Guidance on how to go about this task, and an example of a parish constitution already in place, can be found at www.arcc-catholic-rights.net/resources.htm.) This must be the decision of fundamentally the whole parish community, for all will have to live by that decision.

Step 3: The word constitution

Some may shy away from the term constitution, thinking perhaps it is too profane, too secular. It need only be remembered that the highest authority in the structure of the Catholic church -- the pope and all the bishops gathered together in an ecumenical council -- used precisely that term for its most important documents: “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” and that Pope Paul VI called for and set up a commission to develop a constitution for the church (*Lex Fundamentalis Ecclesiae*).

Step 4: What should and should not be in a constitution

It is important to bear in mind that a constitution is to outline the vital, the formative elements of the governance of a community, in this case, the parish. It needs to avoid details beyond the essential, and concentrate on the critical structures of governance. Only a brief prologue should refer to the underlying spirit of the constitution, being careful not to be too specific theologically, for every theology, no matter how brilliant, sensitive, and Gospel-centered, is only one way to articulate what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It must include a clear statement of the rights and responsibilities of all parties of the parish, including such principles as transparency, accountability, representation, due process of law, decision-making procedures, terms of office, and separation and balance of powers.

Above all, it is absolutely essential that the constitution be written. There is nothing like having to choose the words to write down -- especially words that you are going to have to live by -- to help clarify thinking. Further, when future disagreements arise, as they inevitably will, it is vital to have written documents to refer to. This will especially be the case when a new pastor arrives. Many Catholics have had wonderful parishes in the past so long as "Father Goodpastor" was the pastor, only to see it dismantled when he was replaced by "Monsignor O'Hooligan." A written constitution may not be a sufficient cause of a continued Vatican II democratic parish, but it is a necessary cause of one.

Step 5: Liturgical installation

Once the long process of dialogue, deliberation and decision making results in a constitution, a further step is important. One of the strengths of Catholicism is the tradition of giving everything important and even things not so important a liturgy. A constitution that a parish is going to live by is an important sacred reality. It is a sacramental, and hence deserves a solemn liturgical ceremony.

The constitution ought to be printed and framed in a fittingly solemn manner. A liturgy with an appropriate set of prayers, music and gestures needs to be designed by the parish liturgy committee for the formal installation of the constitution. It is important that the pastor, the parish council, other officers of the parish, and as much of the entire parish as possible be present at the installation liturgy. For the initial installation of the constitution, it would be well to invite the bishop to be present as an observer. The pastor, parish council and other officers, as well as the rest of the parish members present, ought to make a solemn public pledge to follow the constitution.

An appropriate day should be chosen for the annual liturgical recommitment of all to follow the constitution -- perhaps the feast day of the parish's name. Such a solemn liturgical installation, and its annual reconfirmation, will keep it present in all the parishioners' consciousness, and go a long way toward ensuring the constitution's continuing viability.

Step 6: Live by the constitution

It goes without saying that the parish must then live by its constitution. Much will be learned in living with the constitution, including the possibility that amendments will be found to be important, perhaps even essential. The discipline of so living will also gradually reshape and mature the thinking and action of all involved, clergy and laity, including future generations. If a parish has lived and grown with a constitution for five

or 10 years or more, it will be difficult for a future “Monsignor O’Hooligan” to come in (or even to want to!) and dismantle it.

Step 7: Nonprofit ownership

In Spokane, Wash., the bankruptcy court has declared the parishes to be the property of the bishop, and therefore subject to the millions of dollars in claims levied against the bishop. While a settlement of sorts has been reached, the future of parishes has been placed with the court. The ownership structure of the American Catholic church may well be dramatically different in the future as a result of these judicial proceedings and claims against the church elsewhere.

Regardless of the outcome of current litigation around the country, it is vital that American Catholics learn both from our past history of parish ownership, also called, the trustee system. Patrick Carey, in *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeship*, wrote: “The trustee system was a legitimate outgrowth of prior European Catholic customs. ... Thus, the new circumstances forced them not so much to create a new sense of lay participation as to nourish and democratize traditions of lay involvement that were already rooted in their European Catholic experiences.” American Catholics can also learn a valuable lesson from the worldwide explosion of nongovernmental organizations.

Clearly, the ownership of properties and other assets is a major source of power. The adage “Follow the money” applies to the Catholic Church as much as to other institutions. Ideal parish ownership would be as it was at the start of U.S. history: ownership by the parish as a corporation.

That, however, would at present be difficult to bring about, for the bishop would simply forbid it. However, it would not be difficult for a parish to set up a nonprofit organization -- a 501(c)(3) -- especially for any new donations/expenditures. The nonprofit parish organization could be set up to sponsor social justice work, youth work, construct buildings, schools, buy a parish hall, send out relief workers, missionaries, students, pay salaries. All the assets of whatever form purchased through this nonprofit organization would belong to the nonprofit parish organization and be disposed of according to its founding document, which should be based on the parish constitution.

Who could object to the people of a parish forming a 501(c)(3) in order to undertake some new good work? Further, no permission is necessary. It would be vital, however, not to include the pastor in the nonprofit, so that he may not be threatened by the bishop. In addition, if parishioners have a secure say in the disposal of their goods, they, of course, will be much more inclined to donate to this 501(c)(3). More important, as the financial value of the nonprofit parish organization grows, it will automatically support the responsible functioning of the parish constitution. It will also begin to build a “field of force,” almost like a magnetic field, of decision-making power, thereby strengthening the democratic governance of the parish. For that reason, it is important that as much of the whole parish as possible be involved in the 501(c)(3) in a democratic manner, and be closely related to the parish constitution.

Step 8: Constitutional parish networking

A constitutional parish -- with a matching 501(c)(3) -- will necessarily be a flourishing parish for it will automatically draw on all the talents of all members. Just how much it flourishes will depend on a combination of the talents of the parishioners (including preeminently those of the pastor and lay leaders), the care with which the constitution has been planned and structured, and the wisdom with which the parish has grown in living it. Consequently, the constitutional parish will become a magnet for other parishes. However, the constitutional parish must, for its own survival, also become an evangelizing constitutional parish in the literal sense, that is, it needs to spread the “good news” of creating and living by a parish constitution with a parallel 501(c)(3) so that other parishes will go down the same path.

If a number of constitutional parishes develop in a diocese, it is critical that they learn from, and support, each other. They will need to form a network of constitutional parishes. As their numbers grow, the likelihood of any of them receiving a “Monsignor O’Hooligan” as pastor will proportionately shrink.

Step 9: Negotiate with bishop/personnel committee ahead of time

However, without waiting for a network of constitutional parishes to develop, the parish council (which includes the pastor) should in good time arrange to meet with the bishop and diocesan personnel committee to negotiate with them ahead of time a serious role for themselves in the choice of the successor of their pastor. They must insist on the retention of their governing constitution. Clearly they will want to do all this only after they have lived by their constitution for some time and built a solid reputation in the diocese. The substantial character of the nonprofit parish organization will obviously also have a significant influence here -- money talks.

Step 10: Publicize

We know from civil society that freedom of the press is critical to make democracy work. We Catholics also learned that lesson at Vatican Council II when freedom of the press was one of the main engines pulling the church out of its medieval and Counter Reformation mentality into modernity. Without it, Vatican II would have been as much of a disaster as Lateran Council V (1512-17), which ushered in the Protestant Reformation.

Conclusion

As in society in general, a governance structure will be what the governed allow. If most Catholics in an area believe that a shared responsibility governance structure, a democratic church, is not possible, it will not happen, regardless of what ecumenical councils or popes have said supporting such. The first, and perhaps most challenging, task is to convince large numbers of the Catholic community, in this case, the parish, that a democratic constitution for the parish is in keeping with the Gospel and Catholic tradition. Then the rest of the nine steps are obvious, though by no means easy. The critical issue is whether or not a constitutional parish can survive beyond its “founding pastor.” As I noted at the beginning, canon law and the reality on the ground stack the chances against it. That is why Steps 5 through Step 10 are vital. They are not

individual guarantees against the eventual destruction of a constitutional parish, but as they are carried out, they will proportionally improve the chances of survival. Beyond a constitution for the parish, there is also the need for a diocesan constitution, and eventually a universal Catholic constitution, as Pope Paul VI called for and worked for. This journey to a diocesan and especially a universal constitution of the Catholic Church will doubtless be long, arduous, and probably also serpentine. But it is a journey that a growing number of Catholics feel must be undertaken. Those of us so convinced now have not only the privilege but also the responsibility to push on in the journey, even though we personally may not arrive at the destination. What is obtainable in the near future, however, at least for some fortunate ones of us living in parishes with a "Father Goodpastor," are first, a parish constitution and equally important, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Theologian Leonard Swidler is author of *Toward a Catholic Constitution* (Crossroad Books), and a founder of the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church.

IN MEMORIAM

Voice of the Faithful lost a good friend and American Catholics lost an eminent scholar when Dean R. Hoge passed away on September 13, 2008, in Baltimore MD.

Dean was Professor of Sociology at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. In 1999, he was named director of the Life Cycle Institute at Catholic University, and he served in that capacity until 2004. He was well-known for his research on the Catholic priesthood, including studies of critical problems such as the shortage of priests, the challenges priests face in their first five years, the aging of the priesthood, and the morale of priests.

Former VOTF president Jim Post met Dr. Hoge in 2003, and they discussed Hoge's understanding of the factors that may have contributed to the protection of sex offenders within the priesthood. As Jim said, "Dean was generous with his time, his insight, and his moral support for VOTF's mission and goals. We counted him as a real friend of our movement and we extend our sympathy to Dean's wife, Josephine, and the entire family."

Obituaries for Mr. Hoge can be found in the New York Times (9/24/08) and Washington Post (9/19/08).

Letter to the Editor

Reader Dan Sparapani, wonders why bishops are not doing more to make Eucharist more readily available. "If Eucharist is really this important and central to our faith, then if the bishops fail to take action to make Eucharist readily available, are they not also guilty of serious sin in failing to do so?"

To read more:

Letter to the Editor

Greetings

I am curious why the question isn't being asked of the bishops as to whether they are guilty of mortal sin for failure to do what is necessary (and possible) to make Eucharist more readily available (dereliction of duty) instead of closing or "merging" parishes and having parishes endure weekends without Mass, all because of shortage of celibate clergy. They have both the power and authority to do so, and since this concerns not doctrinal matter but rather an issue of church discipline, seems like it could be accomplished in short order.

It seems to be a simple formula: The Church teaches that Eucharist is critical and central to our faith ("source and summit of our faith", according to VAT II documents) without which our faith cannot endure and grow. Also, the bishops continue to remind laity of the commandment-based teaching that laity is guilty of mortal sin if they do not participate in weekly Eucharist. If Eucharist is really this important and central to our faith, then if the bishops fail to take action to make Eucharist readily available, are they not also guilty of serious sin in failing to do so?

I would like to see this question posed to the bishops for their response. Seems like it should be one or the other - either Eucharist and weekly Mass are serious as they teach, so not doing what can be done to make Eucharist available should be a serious dereliction (sin) on the part of the bishops. OR, Eucharist is not all that central, and not participating in weekly Eucharist is not mortally sinful, and thus the bishops are under no moral responsibility to do what they can to make Eucharist available. It is either one or the other, but it can't be both. So, for the Bishops, which is it?

Dan Sparapani

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Are you willing to donate your extra football tickets, trips to the theater, or a week at your vacation home?

Voice of the Faithful is looking for raffle or auction items for upcoming fundraising campaigns. Please contact Jessica at votfpr@votf.org if you would like to help us out. All donations are tax deductible.

Please send your questions and comments to

Vineyard@votf.org

Thank you!

Siobhan Carroll

Vineyard Editor