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## Voice of the Faithful at 20: Keep the Faith – Change the Church

*By Mary Pat Fox, President, Voice of the Faithful*

Voice of the Faithful has been working to do just that – *Keep the Faith and Change the Church* – for twenty years. Change takes a long time, and changing a 2000-year-old organization takes a lot of perseverance! In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXII said: “To proceed gradually is the law of life in all its expressions; therefore, in human institutions, too, it is not possible to renovate for the better except by working from within them, gradually.” Working within the Church makes VOTF unique among modern-day reform organizations.

VOTF began as a small group of concerned Catholics in the basement of St. John the Evangelist Church in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and quickly grew to comprise more members than could fit in the church basement. The founders must have known that the change needed to stop the abuse, and ensure it would never happen again, would take a long time because the structure of our [mission statement and three goals](#) are still on point for what needs to be done.

We began with outrage focused on hearing survivors’ stories and on alerting and educating Catholics to the reality of the abuse crisis, even as it continues today. Child sex abuse was happening at the hands of priests, some of whom we knew and trusted. Abusers do not resemble monsters. They look like ordinary people, hiding in plain sight.

Over the years, we have developed numerous resources to convey this message, all of which can be seen on [VOTF’s website](#), and we have run programs, written letters, and held conferences, among many other projects and initiatives, to keep the focus on *Keeping the Faith and Changing the Church*.

Fast forward twenty years past that meeting at St. John’s, and you will see VOTF completing our fifth annual [diocesan online financial transparency and accountability report](#) and releasing, soon, our first online reviews on lay involvement in Church governance and on diocesan adherence to established child protection guidelines. We need to hold the Church accountable, and these three studies do that.

Presently, we also are engaged in holding Synod sessions in response to Pope Francis’s call for us to journey together in a Synod on Synodality, “*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*.” All are invited to participate in VOTF’s Synod sessions. Watch our webpage, “[Listening to the Faithful: Preparing for the Synod 2021-2023](#)” for information about upcoming sessions and links to register. The information gathered will be submitted to Rome, according to guidelines for Lay Apostolates of the Catholic Church, as VOTF is recognized.

You will hear more about these and our other activities in upcoming issues of *In the Vineyard*, as part of our series of stories marking 2022 as VOTF’s 20th year in service to the Church.

Thank you for your [continued support](#).