

## Voice of the Faithful takes sense of hope and need for transformation from 2020 Catholic Partnership Summit

By Margaret Roylance, VOTF Vice President and Trustee

Voice of the Faithful was invited to take part in the 2020 National Catholic Partnership Summit, Feb. 28 and 29, in Washington, D.C., a gathering of clergy and laity representing leadership from practically every corner of Church life—philanthropy, business, hierarchy,



foundations, universities, health care, young lay people, banking, women religious, non-profits, diocesan fiscal management, and more.

The Summit, broadly supported by bishops but organized and run by the laity, was sponsored by the National Leadership Roundtable, which, like VOTF, is committed to promoting more lay leadership in diocesan operations. Summit co-sponsors included Chicago Archbishop Cardinal Blase Cupich, Boston Archbishop Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez, Sean Callahan, president & CEO of Catholic Relief Services, and Sister Mary Haddad, R.S.M., president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association.

Attending the Summit for VOTF were Mary Pat Fox, VOTF president, and Margaret Roylance, VOTF vice



### Save the Date, Oct. 3

The place to be on Saturday, Oct. 3, is the Boston Marriott Newton Hotel as Voice of the Faithful returns for its **2020 Conference: Visions of a Just Church**. Mark your calendars and join us as we seek visions of what a Church that is just for all the faithful would look like.

Our featured speaker will be Phyllis Zagano, Ph.D., an internationally recognized scholar in Catholic studies and women's roles in the Church and advocate of an ordained women's diaconate. Author of nearly 20 books, she received Voice of the Faithful's Catherine of Siena Distinguished Layperson Award during VOTF's 10th Year Conference in Boston in 2012 and the Issac Hecker Award for Social Justice from the Paulist Center in Boston in 2014. She has served as a member of the Papal Commission on a Permanent Women's Diaconate in the Church and is an adjunct professor at Hofstra University.

The cost for attending VOTF's 2020 Conference is \$150, but you can take advantage of a Two-for-\$230 offer through Labor Day. You may register at [votf.org](http://votf.org) (click on the conference logo on the home page).

We will be at the same great venue as last year and will offer the same mix of interesting speakers, good food, and evocative conversation, so stay tuned for more information.

president and trustee, having been invited by Leadership Roundtable director Thomas J. Healey, Healey Development LLC managing partner. The Leadership Roundtable has a more financial orientation, and VOTF has been recognized for its work in Church financial transparency. This year will be the fourth consecutive year VOTF has reviewed all U.S. dioceses for their online financial transparency.

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# 2020 Catholic Summit *(Continued from Page 1)*

U.S. Papal Nuncio Archbishop Christophe Pierre celebrated the opening Mass, with Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington, D.C., as homilist. Archbishop of Newark Cardinal Joseph Tobin spoke during the Summit's first session, "Envisioning a New Culture of Leadership." Carol Zinn, S.S.J., Ph.D., executive director of the Leadership Conference of Religious Women, joined him on the panel, as well as Christina Lamas, executive director of the National Federation for Catholic youth ministry.

## The New York Times

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2008

### Calling All Catholics to Transform Our Church



On behalf of all Catholics who share our desire to help our Church Voice of the Faithful presents this message on the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the U.S.

Midst of the many serious challenges facing our Church today, we hope for a better tomorrow. VOTF's 15,000 members seek the transformation of our beloved Church.

- We envision a Church that is open, transparent, and accountable.
- We imagine a Church that embraces the gifts and talents of the laity.
- We dream of a Church governed by compassion, informed by justice, empowered by equality, and animated to act collegially.

But we cannot attain this transformation until we heal the wounds still open.

**The Moral Crisis We Face Today**  
Many Catholics know too well the human suffering and financial costs associated with the global clergy

sexual abuse crisis. By 2004, in the U.S. alone, more than 3,000 priests were alleged to have abused almost 11,000 young people between the years 1950 and 2002. Legal settlements by American dioceses amounted to \$4.5 billion in 2007 and now exceed \$2.3 billion overall! Catholic dioceses have filed for bankruptcy in Alaska, Arizona, California, Iowa, Oregon, and Washington. Equally troubling is the fact that our leaders contributed to this terrible toll.

**How can our Church be a moral beacon when so many bishops who repeatedly transferred known predators remain in office?**

Without justice for the abused and accountability from the bishops, this crisis will continue to plague our Church.

**Our Church Faces Many Other Serious Challenges As Well!**  
The declining number of clergy jeopardizes the availability of Eucharist. The lay continues to be excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making. Catholics — particularly the youth — are leaving our Church to join other religions, or no religion at all. The hopeful vision of Vatican II remains largely unfulfilled, and deep polarization exists in our Church about how best to fulfill our sacred mission.

**We seek a lasting, transformed Body of Christ that serves all people with compassion, collegiality and cooperation.** We believe in collaboration among all members of our Church in order to achieve this transformation.

**The Answer to Transformation**  
We seek a transformed Body of Christ, a Church that both calls upon and serves all members, lay and ordained alike, with compassion and integrity.

#### Our Transformed Church Would:

**Those survivors who justifiably seek compassion.** Pope Benedict and all our bishops would meet with survivors of abuse, listen to their stories, and offer them what we imagine the pain here our Church has done and now is becoming a source of healing.

**Make bishops accountable to the people they serve.** Bishops should not be responsible for the actions of those bishops who repeatedly transferred predator priests. Bishops of every diocese would bring transparency, honesty and responsibility to their offices, and support ongoing efforts that protect the laity of our dioceses. Protecting our children would become a primary responsibility of every bishop and a source of pride for all Catholics.

**Embrace full lay participation.** Catholics may be called to share responsibility for the mission of the Church. Lay members are invited to share in the decisions that impact the life of our parishes and our dioceses, including parish change. Our parishes would grow, and our children and grandchildren would become proud active members of our Catholic Church.

**Have full financial transparency and accountability.** Every parish would publish annual financial statements. Every parish and diocese would

have fully engaged finance committees providing adequate oversight and oversight of all financial matters. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops would require that all parishes and dioceses have financial audits and would require that all parishes and dioceses report the 99% of diocesan reporting without exception, within one year of the audit.

**Release the gifts of the Spirit.** Fresh spiritual and intellectual energies would be unleashed and encouraged. We would foster meaningful prayer and contemplative practices and encourage the laity to take responsibility for the growth and well-being of our Church.

**To all Catholics: Voice of the Faithful needs YOU!** By joining our leadership, you are a primary partner in the mission of the Church. We need you to lead us. One of the best ways to do this is to help us hold our parishes and dioceses accountable for the growth and well-being of our Church.

**With your help, we can make it happen!** Please go to [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org) to learn more about our goals, objectives and what you can do as a Catholic. Together we can transform our Church.

#### About Voice of the Faithful

**None of the Faithful (VOTF)** is a worldwide movement of concerned mainstream Catholics formed in 2002 in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Our mission is to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. Our goals are to support survivors of clergy sexual abuse support priests of integrity and shape structural change within the Catholic Church.

*VOTF has worked tirelessly toward Church reform. By the time Pope Benedict XVI visited the U.S. in 2008, VOTF had advanced many proposals. Just before his visit, VOTF ran this full-page ad in The New York Times, calling all Catholics to a transformed Church that would: make bishops accountable to those they serve; embrace full lay participation; have full financial transparency and accountability; and release the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

online resources and broad range of novel suggestions for reform.

There was a palpable spirit of hope at the Summit, from the opening Mass to the closing session on "A Culture with Young Catholics at the Leadership Table." These young Catholics have many forward-looking ideas for what the Church needs to do to reform and heal.

During the Summit, the Leadership Roundtable expected to develop guiding principles for recommendations that will:

1. impact the Catholic Church based on three principles: accountability, transparency, and co-responsibility;
2. impact the leadership and management culture of the Church, in line with Catholic beliefs, ecclesiology, and canon law;
3. restore trust in the Church based on measurable, visible outcomes;
4. engage both ordained and lay Catholics, working together for the mission;
5. lean forward into new possibilities;
6. be realistic and able to be translated into practical strategy and implementation.

Many realistic and practical recommendations that were made at the Summit will be delineated in the final report, and following the published report, many Catholics will await their implementation. Some proposed changes can be made at the grassroots of the Church, within parishes and other faith communities. Some can be achieved within organizations like VOTF and other Catholic non-profits. Others will require cooperation by the USCCB.

Perfectly clear during the Summit was the strong support, at least among some influential USCCB members, for Pope Francis' vision of the Church. San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy was one. Among the many references provided to prepare for the Summit was his November 2019 McTaggart Lecture at St. Mary's University. In it, he describes a bunker mentality on the part of Church leadership and a culture of maintaining the physical and organizational structures of the past, along with outdated decision-making processes.

A highlight of the Summit was Sr. Carol Zinn's eloquent and prophetic presentation. She was clear about the damage that clinging to the past can do to the Church of today and tomorrow. She called, not for change in the Church, but for transformation—a transformation like the one that turns a caterpillar into a butterfly, leaving no element of the original untouched. If the Spirit is with us, anything is possible.

Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, adjunct secretary for the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, spoke during the second session, "A Culture of Co-responsible Governance and Leadership," along with Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, C.M., president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and others. Fr. Holtschneider also has served as chief operating officer of Ascension, a leading national Catholic health system.

The importance of VOTF's work in Church accountability and transparency was clear during the Summit's third session, "A Culture of Ethical Financial Management and Stewardship," which showed that many proposals now being made have been advanced by VOTF for years. Many Summit participants also acknowledged VOTF's considerable



# A “couple” of Voice of the Faithful’s voices

Ethel and Chris Doyle exemplify the vision and dedication typical of Voice of the Faithful volunteers—Catholics who envision a more pastoral, lay-led Church, and who are committed to working for it as long as it takes to achieve.

Ethel and Chris joined St. Agnes Parish when they moved to Arlington, Mass., in 1983. Their parish now is the Collaborative of St. Agnes & St. Camillus.

Chris preceded Ethel as a VOTF volunteer. He had worked with VOTF Executive Director Donna Doucette before she joined VOTF and learned of the organization from her. “It was always VOTF this and VOTF that,” Chris recalls. “I probably heard more about VOTF from Donna than I learned anywhere else.” He also knew of VOTF through people at his parish who also attended affiliate meetings at St. Eulalia’s Parish in Winchester, Mass.

When Donna became VOTF executive director, according to Chris, she would always say, “When you have the time, I have a project for you.” When he cut back on his work hours, Donna asked again, and Chris agreed to come onboard.

“I had been contributing to Voice of the Faithful,” Chris says, “but wanted to do more because of how much VOTF is in line with what I feel are the Church’s needs and what I think the Church should be like in today’s world, and I have always been impressed with its mission and goals.”

“Our family and Donna’s family were friends,” Ethel says, “So when we would get together, we heard a lot about VOTF and discussed the issues.” She recalls how VOTF was making news right from the start, as more and more people gathered each week at St. John the Evangelist Church in Wellesley in the early days.

During his time in the office, Chris’ primary responsibility is maintaining the integrity of the donor database. He also enters all donations (online, monthly, and those that come in the mail) into the database, reconciles bank deposits with online summaries to make sure they match, performs data-

base backups, and supports the office with anything that has to do with the fundraising software.

Chris’ enthusiasm has rubbed off on Ethel. “Chris asked me to come to VOTF’s 2018 conference in Providence,” Ethel says. “I was blown away by the speakers and learned more than I ever had about Voice of the Faithful, and I guess I made some noise about it because Donna asked me to chair the next conference.”

Ethel’s now serving for a second time as VOTF’s conference chair. “My strengths are organizational, just what any conference needs, and I really like working with the staff and other volunteers,” Ethel says. “But if I didn’t believe in what VOTF is doing, I wouldn’t be here. VOTF is trying to make sure there is accountability in the Church, for example, encouraging priests to work with the laity collaboratively and not just top down.”

“My belief is that the role of the laity has to be enhanced in the Church for the Church to survive in today’s world,” Chris adds. “This is what keeps drawing me to Voice of the Faithful, simply but truly elevating the ‘voice’ of the faithful.”

Taking on that type of responsibility scares some people, Chris and Ethel say, but this is changing and much of the impetus for the change is coming from VOTF. They mention five primary reasons:

- focus has stayed on the mission and goals;
- feeling VOTF is against the Church has faded;
- financial accountability work has increased the online financial transparency of many dioceses;
- invaluable resources on VOTF website, ranging from child protection to prayerful voices;
- conferences that provide interesting, informative speakers; venues for sharing stories and views with other people from all over the country; and panels about how to raise your voice in your local faith community.

“We need to continue the research and education we do,” Chris says, “and keep providing information to people, so they understand what they need to do. The laity need to take on a bigger role for themselves, and the more they’re involved, the more effect they’ll have, which builds on itself and mushrooms into something that’s good for everyone.”

“I agree,” Ethel says, “and would add my wish that we could get more priests in the parishes involved with VOTF. I hate to think what would happen if VOTF were not around.”



# Healing begins with clergy-laity partnership

## *As true now as when VOTF first proposed it in 2002*

*The following is taken from a draft statement that Voice of the Faithful's Structural Change Working Group made prior to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Spring 2002 General Assembly, where the Dallas Charter was developed. The assembly took place only a few months after VOTF was formed, and VOTF had a significant presence there. Reflecting on this statement, you can see how history has shown VOTF correct about clergy abuse from the very start. The Church is still catching up.*



*Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, now of Washington, D.C., in a UPI photo as bishop of Bellville, Illinois, and USCCB president, speaking at a news conference about USCCB's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Dallas Charter) adopted in June, 2002. (Joe Mitchell UPI Photo Service/Newscom)*

As the USCCB prepares to meet in Dallas (June 12-14, 2002), our attention is rightly focused on the formulation and implementation of an effective sexual abuse policy. But an underlying question of equal importance is: How should the bishops interact with the many thousands of Catholic lay men and women who have been stirred to action by the scandal and the abominable institutional abuse of power?

What does the laity want from the bishops? Six essential steps form the core of a new approach to building a constructive relationship between clergy and laity.

First, we insist on the full participation of the Catholic laity in formulating and implementing a national/diocesan sexual abuse policy. In diocese after diocese, the evidence mounts that it is the Catholic laity that possesses the knowledge and credibility to shape effective, credible policies of reform ...

Second, we call upon the bishops to issue a formal declaration of responsibility for the medical and psychological damage done by clergy who have engaged in sexual abuse ...

Third, we call for a policy of complete zero tolerance. Although there are bound to be instances in which priests are removed for actions that occurred many years before, there is no reasonable alternative to complete zero tolerance ...

Fourth, we insist on a meaningful program of compassionate outreach to victims/survivors and their families. The harm done to victims is a continuing problem that requires on-going psychological and medical treatment ...

Fifth, we call for the development of a meaningful, system of joint clerical/laity responsibility for the development, oversight, and evaluation of diocesan priests. Lay involvement in administration of seminaries should be included. The simple truth is that the formation of new priests must become more centered on their lives in parishes ...

Finally, we support local selection of priests. We believe that each parish council has the right to conduct appropriate processes for selection of priests, including the right to review personnel records of diocesan nominees to pastoral positions. No parent or grandparent would knowingly permit a priest of questionable reputation or character to assume a position of power in their Church community ...

These steps will not solve all the problems of the clergy sexual abuse scandal. But they do form a sensible "phase one" that will recognize the important role the Catholic laity must assume in healing the Church. Healing the Church will be a long journey. It behooves the bishops to begin by enlisting the full participation of the Catholic laity.

**VOICE**  
OF THE FAITHFUL

*Keep the Faith, Change the Church*

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Voice of the Faithful® is a worldwide organization of Roman Catholics working to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can participate actively in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. We support survivors of clergy sexual abuse, support priests of integrity, and work to help shape structural change in the Church.

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