

VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport
Minutes of the General Meeting
December 4, 2008

Dan Sullivan, CoChair, called the meeting to order. Those present were led in prayer by Marge Hickey and Rene Corcoran.

John Lee reported on the Voice of Compassion Fund raising letter sent to all members and encouraged all to contribute.

The Treasurer's report was presented by Dan Sullivan in the absence of Marilyn Kirchner, Treasurer.

Announcements included:

St. Thomas More Workshop on "Reassessing the Spirit of Vatican II", Jan. 9-10.

Rosado case Hearing held on 12/2/08 in Hartford

Women's Caucus support of Fr. Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll priest who has been excommunicated for supporting the ordination of women. All present were invited to sign the petition supporting Fr. Roy.

Jamie Dance, CoChair, introduced the speaker, Sister Margaret Farley, faculty member of Yale Divinity School, author of several books, recipient of many awards, most recently, the Yves Congar Award. Her topic for the evening was, "Forgiveness in the Service of Justice".

After expressing her support for the work of VOTF, expressly for its commitment to structural change in the Church, Sister Farley began her talk by outlining the many areas of pain and suffering in the world today and of the need to rid ourselves of self-righteousness and recognize the needs of each other, the need to "decenter" ourselves through the practice of mercy. She proceeded to define the three areas of forgiveness she would describe in her talk.

The first area was the Christian tradition of forgiveness as found in the biblical texts of the gospels of Matthew and John. This scriptural foundation for the Church's practice of forgiveness gives authority to all who share in the gifts of the Spirit to grant this forgiveness and acceptance.

The second area, the meaning of forgiveness, can be understood from our own experience of forgiving and being forgiven. To forgive, Sister Farley pointed out, is to let go, but not passively. As we are always in need of forgiveness, the receiving of human forgiveness can bring us to a deeper awareness and trust in God's forgiveness.

The third area of this topic relates to that forgiveness that includes resistance. In the face of great wrong, resistance is essential; forgiveness can include "never again". Here Sister Farley mentioned some great examples of resistance with love and acceptance: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement and the attitude of non-violence and resistance, the Truth Commission which is established in about 20 countries where victims can reclaim their lives and in some instances forgiveness is possible. In this instance of possible forgiveness, Sister

elaborated on the idea of “anticipatory forgiveness’ where there is a readiness to forgive even for those who continue to resist. In our Church there is a need for this kind of forgiveness.

Finally, Sister Farley reemphasized the consequence of forgiveness and being forgiven, a new way of seeing the “other” and of settling conflicts. Only by seeking this forgiveness will we be able to speak truth to power and to surrender to Divine love.

Several questions from the assemblage were proposed and answered by our speaker and the meeting was closed with a prayer and a reminder that our next general meeting will be held on January 8, 2009.

Submitted by:

Peg Mooney, Recording Secretary