

# Our Voice

An E-Newsletter for Those Interested and Involved in The Voice of The Faithful • Connecticut  
March 2007 Issue Number 17

## NATIONAL VOTF SPEAKS OUT FOR BISHOP THOMAS GUMBLETON

(Information from the VOTF website)

### VOTF Protests Bishop Gumbleton Dismissal

Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) protests the removal from St. Leo's parish of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton by Cardinal Adam Maida and the Archdiocese of Detroit. "The shortage of priests in our Church is already challenging the needs of American Catholics. To remove a priest in good standing, a priest who is willing and eager to continue to minister in his parish, seems, at best, counterproductive. There are hundreds of priests in their late 70s and 80s who continue to serve in parishes because they know there is no one available to take their place. If the voice of the laity was not a factor in Bishop Gumbleton's removal, it is time they should be," said Mary Pat Fox, President of VOTF.

In his final Mass with his parishioners at St. Leo's parish in Detroit, Bishop Gumbleton, 77, stated that his dismissal was in retaliation for his lobbying efforts on behalf of the victims of abuse by members of the clergy. (Last year Bishop Gumbleton testified before the Ohio State Legislature on behalf of a bill extending the Statute of Limitations for sex abuse crimes. At the same time he revealed that he had been a victim of clergy abuse while a young seminarian.) Bishop Gumbleton has been a courageous spokesperson for greater accountability in Church affairs and an unfailing advocate for world peace. His ministry has progressed a vision of "communio" from the parish to the global arena.

"There is no reason to doubt the veracity of a man who has been speaking out for justice throughout his ministry," said Fox. "To remain silent on this issue would be to give consent. Voice of the Faithful does not consent to the shoddy treatment accorded Bishop Thomas Gumbleton."

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### VOTF™ Mission Statement

*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.*

#### AFFILIATE FACILITATORS:

##### Downtown Hartford

Doris Bourque: [dorishbourque@cox.net](mailto:dorishbourque@cox.net)

##### Greater West Hartford

Bill Carroll: [tbc7288@aol.com](mailto:tbc7288@aol.com)

##### Greater Bristol

Diana Barlow: [ddbvotf@aol.com](mailto:ddbvotf@aol.com)

##### Greater Farmington Valley

Dave Blume: [djbmo@aol.com](mailto:djbmo@aol.com)

#### HELPFUL LINKS:

**National VOTF:** [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org)

**Hartford Regional VOTF:** [www.hrvotf.sytes.net](http://www.hrvotf.sytes.net)

**THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC:** [www.taconline.org](http://www.taconline.org)

#### How to become involved:

Want to join VOTF or start a Parish Voice affiliate?  
Just email Jayne O'Donnell at [jaynedirish@yahoo.com](mailto:jaynedirish@yahoo.com)

#### WE NEED YOUR HELP

Need someone to go through approximately 200 names and cull names that are NOT on an affiliate list. If you can spare an hour, email Jayne O'Donnell at [jaynedirish@yahoo.com](mailto:jaynedirish@yahoo.com)

**WANTED: WRITERS, IDEAS, COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS**...write up your affiliate meeting or program...send your ideas, comments, suggestions, to Joanne Blair, Editor, at [ejblair@comcast.net](mailto:ejblair@comcast.net)

## **VOTF presents "Priest of Integrity Award" to Bishop Gumbleton**

Mary Pat Fox, VOTF President, traveled to Washington, D.C. to present Bishop Gumbleton with the Priest of Integrity Award. Fox stated:

"This is our 4th Priest of Integrity Award. Our earlier recipients included Rev. Thomas P. Doyle, O.P., J.C.D., who we are privileged to have with us today, Fr. James Scahill of Springfield, MA, and Msgr. Lawrence Breslin of Cincinnati, OH...

Bishop Gumbleton has long been an advocate for peace and started the organization, Pax Christi USA. Today we are here to honor Bishop Gumbleton for his support of an active role for the laity in the church, his extraordinary support of survivors of clergy sex abuse and for the example he shows each of us in living life with an informed conscience...this is a man who, when at some future date the High Court of History stands in judgment, it will say 'he was truly a man of courage; he stood up to his enemies and his associates'...

Bishop Gumbleton, you give us hope that others might follow your courageous lead, faith that God is with us and our Church and thanksgiving for your friendship and support. It is with great humility that I present to you the Voice of the Faithful Priest of Integrity Award."



## **GREATER BRIDGEPORT VOTF USES AD TO ADDRESS FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC**

(The following was published in several local newspapers in the Bridgeport Diocese.)

### **TRUTH AND SLANDER AND FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC**

In an editorial entitled "Salt" in the February issue of Fairfield County Catholic (FCC), the official newspaper of the Diocese of Bridgeport boldly proclaimed, "Everything you read in this newspaper is true." The editorial then went on to conflate the content of its news pages and editorial pages, and to attack the secular press and Voice of the Faithful: "The op-ed pages (of the secular press) are also the favorite haunt of dissident groups like Voice of the Faithful, who jump on any contrarian bandwagon to gain publicity. They offer nothing constructive or even accurate, only vitriol...Freedom of the press should not mean freedom to spread untruths or to slander."

### **Given those statements, VOTF asks: Will Joseph McAleer, editor of FCC, and Bishop William E. Lori answer these questions?**

1. Does FCC choose not to print the truth when it is inconvenient or damaging to the reputation of the bishop, the diocese or the Catholic Church?
2. Does FCC publish a story such as "How is the Diocese funded?" only when pressured by reports of financial mismanagement in parishes in Darien and Greenwich?
3. Does FCC believe that the bishop's years long effort, at untold expense, to block the publication of documents the Diocese filed in Connecticut Superior Court relating to priestly sexual abuse and episcopal cover-up can be reconciled with his dedication to the "truth"?
4. Does FCC believe that the healthy, spirited discussion it claims to favor justifies the repeated refusal of Bishop Lori to engage in dialogue with VOTF? Does he fear the "truth" spoken by these faithful Catholics?
5. Does FCC believe that Bishop Lori, who is among a distinct minority of a dozen or so U.S. bishops (out of almost 200) to ban VOTF from meeting on Church

# CALENDAR

## **GWH VOTF**

**Thursday, April 12 at 7:30 P.M.**  
**St. Peter Claver Church**  
**Pleasant Street, West Hartford**

## **SNAP CONNECTICUT**

**Holds meetings in the  
HARTFORD AREA**  
**On the 2nd Wednesday of the  
Month from 7 to 9 P.M>>**

## **BRIDGEPORT/NEW HAVEN**

Meetings Announced on a Month-to-month basis  
Locations not published for privacy reasons  
(Info at [www.snapct.org](http://www.snapct.org))

## ***DON'T MISS IT!***

**VERY REV. TERENCE KRISTOFK, C.P.**  
**will speak on**  
**THE CHURCH WE LOVE:**  
**An Invitation to Dialogue**

**7 P.M. Thursday, April 17**  
**St Mary's Parish Center**  
**940 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury**

**Father Kristofak's talk, sponsored by  
St. Mary's Parish and Farmington Valley  
VOTF, will touch upon the challenges  
and successes he has seen in the  
Church during his eight years as  
provincial of the Passionist Order.**

## **Greater Bridgeport VOTF Uses**

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property, can reconcile his action with the truth that Archbishops Henry Mansell of Hartford and Wilton Gregory of Atlanta (the immediate past president of the USCCB), among many others, permit VOTF affiliates in their dioceses to meet on church property?

6. Does FCC believe that its rejection of an ad for a lecture by Rev. Richard McBrien, the distinguished theology professor from the University of Notre Dame, because the Chair of Catholic Studies at Fairfield University and VOTF jointly sponsored it, comports with the diocese's mission to evangelize the Catholic faithful? Is this not a suppression of the "truth"?

7. Does FCC believe VOTF members have the right declared by the Second Vatican Council (Lumen Gentium 37) to make their opinions known to their bishop?

8. Does FCC know that Canon 220 and The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2475-2479) prohibit anyone from harming the reputation of another?

9. Does FCC acknowledge that its attack on VOTF, whose members are faithful and courageous Catholics of long-standing service to the Church, is slanderous?

10. Does Bishop Lori condone this campaign of slander against VOTF?



## **Sister Theresa Kane offers vision for 21st century Church: A community of equals and a community of disciples**

By Joanne P. Blair

Sister Theresa Kane is perhaps best known for that moment in time when, as President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, she greeted Pope John Paul II during his 1979 visit to the U.S. Turning to the leader of the Church she calmly but firmly said, "our contemplation leads us to state that the church, in its struggle to be faithful to its call for reverence and dignity for all persons, must respond by providing the possibility of women as persons being included in all the ministries of the church." Her gently issued plea reverberated around the world; the pope, however, was unresponsive and visibly annoyed.

It was quite a different scene when Sister Theresa addressed a large group of VOTF members at the First Congregational Church in Norwalk at their March meeting. Speaking on "A Vision for the 21st Century Church" she told the group "as Voice of the Faithful you are called forth, joining a long line of protestors and prophets", noting that VOTF is part of a whole procession of movements within the Church that began as marginal groups. In her own inimitable style, which is both unassuming and passionate, she addressed the group both as a community of believers and as individuals with their own unique relationship with God. "We are called to be a community of equals, a community of disciples, just as the early Christian community was both a community of equals and a community of disciples, not an organization. However, without women in all positions, we do not have a community of equals." Sister Theresa was firm in her belief that community, our concern for one another, is primary in our lives; thus, a deepening of personal spirituality leads to the bettering of our community. It is her belief that the institution itself (i.e. the Church) must serve the community or it will be reformed or abolished.

Addressing the audience as individuals, Sister Theresa emphasized the tie between spirituality and community. In our relationship with God, she stated that it is essential that each of us have a vision, a way to be passionate about something which gives us hope and a zest for life, characteristics that she herself displayed with every

word spoken. She encouraged her listeners to ask themselves "What is my vision...what would I like to do before I die...for myself...to better society?" In pursuing this vision she warned that it might be necessary to act in anger, but never with hostility or rage. She reminded us that each of us is inviolate, made in the image and likeness of God; each of us has agency (ability to act) and is director of his/her own life. "The way God made me is God's gift to me; what I do with it is my gift to God" she affirmed.

When identifying herself as a feminist, she defines the term as someone passionate about equality, a phrase that accurately describes Sister Theresa herself. She noted that the ordination of women is not unthinkable since women have already been ordained by bishops, during World War II and recently. These ordinations, she said, were "not licit but valid." Her strong feeling about equality led to her comment that she sees all religions as routes to God. Referring to her introduction as "an outstanding Catholic", she stated wryly that sometimes she felt like a "Catholic standing outside." Her progressive stance on the practice of her faith has led to public chiding by conservative organizations for the various stands she has taken.

Her own route to where she is today is a faith journey that has been long (she joined the Religious Sisters of Mercy in the pre-Vatican II 1950's), varied and very productive. She has been leader of her order, director of Mount Mercy Catholic Hospital in Detroit, head of the Leadership Conference on Women Religious and recipient of their 2004 outstanding Leadership Award, among her more public accomplishments. When she received the LCWR award in 2004 she said, "This evening I stand as one woman with you and among you. I also stand in solidarity with women across the globe, which comprise 53% of our world population. Massive numbers of them are uneducated, live in fear, in poverty, in desperation...As I accept this award, I do so with a continuing passionate concern for the plight of women." Her words then and now emphasize the need for both community and personal spirituality and the unbreakable bond between the two.



# VOTF SPEAKS OUT

Dear Friends,

On January 27th, I attended Mass at a shoreline church. The celebrant and homilist was Father George. His last name is long, tangled and, to me at least, unpronounceable. One of the parishioners told me that since the previous pastor retired they have had three Polish priests and now, Father George, who they think is from India.

But I digress...

Father George's homily was delivered from the altar rather than the pulpit, which I thought to be rather unusual. It turns out that not only was the delivery location unusual, the homily was unintelligible! Father George's pronunciation and accent prevented me from understanding anything except a few words. I have no doubt that when he speaks in his native tongue, he is an excellent homilist but not in English. While struggling to understand him, my mind wandered and a thought came to mind. Where are all the American priests? I know there is a shortage of priests and that vocations are at an all-time low but still, where are the American priests? Why do we import priests from all over the world? It seems that the goal of American seminarians is to be ordained and then get sent to Rome or Europe to "study". I was under the impression that a priest was called to serve the people of a parish. In this diocese, there is a priest who used to serve a parish but now is the bishop's secretary. I would think there are many people; a sister, a brother, a deacon, or a layperson, who would jump at the chance to be the bishop's secretary.

A priest should be in a parish with the people!

How many American priests are in Rome? If the pope needs so many priests in Rome, let him take them from Poland or India, which appear to have a surplus.

How many American priests are "studying" in Europe? It seems to me that we need a few less Canon Lawyers and a few more parish priests. I think it is more important to have a priest serve in a parish than to send him to Europe to become an expert in the stained glass of Belgian Cathedrals.

If we are going to send our brand new priests for further study, then let them spend a few weeks with Father Joesph Finnerty or Monsignor George Farlan. Father Finnerty is in the Norwich Diocese and Monsignor Farlan is the pastor of Sacred Heart in the Springfield Diocese. In my opinion, these two priests are the two best homilists in the United States and I am sure they could teach quite a bit about preaching, especially how to keep the congregation interested and awake! I believe that we can all learn something by just listening to them.

And while we're about it, let's send ALL deacons to either of these two priests for a week or so of intense education and practice in delivering a decent homily. I went to the same church the following week and the deacon who was the homilist was far better than Father George but his homily was terrible! It was totally uninteresting and far too long. People were fidgeting all over the church. A few dozed off. It served me well, however, because a baby in the pew in front of me was fidgeting and babbling with his mother. I must say that I saw and heard more of my savior in the fidgeting and babbling of that baby because I got nothing from the deacon's homily.

Think about it if you will,

**Casey Serra**  
Norwich, CT

P.S. A sincere thanks to Father Finnerty for the opening and closing lines.

*(From your editor: I add Father Tom O'Rourke to Casey's list of super homilists!)*

**Spread  
the Word**

***Invite a friend to  
the next meeting.***

# AROUND THE CHURCH - NEWS IN BRIEF

By Joanne Blair

## IS THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS OVER?

Although the USCCB would like to think it is, the crisis is still an issue: in newspapers, in the movies and on television and, with even greater frequency, in small newspapers around the country.

At the beginning of January the Boston Globe celebrated the anniversary of its exposure of the sexual abuse crisis with two articles on its op-ed page -- one by Cardinal Sean O'Malley, head of the Boston Archdiocese, entitled "Rebuilding faith, five years on" and the second by Steven Krueger, founding executive director of VOTF, entitled "Unanswered questions linger." VOTF, an organization that did not exist when the scandal broke, was given equal time with one of the most powerful archdioceses in the country by the newspaper that brought the crisis to light.

Later in the month, FRONTLINE, a feature of PBS Television presented "The Hand of God," the tale of a sexual abuse survivor as filmed by his brother. This was followed by the Academy Award nomination (documentary category) of "Deliver Us from Evil," the harrowing story of a serial child molester.

The sexual abuse crisis came to cable TV when CNN brought the story to ANDERSON COOPER 360 on March 12 when their own Headline News Anchor Thomas Roberts revealed his personal account of the abuse he suffered at the hands of Father Jeff Toohey, chaplain at Calvert Hall. He talked about the psychological damage, a suicide attempt and, finally, after a decade and a half, his decision to speak out. Meanwhile a

second victim, Michael Goles, had already come forward to accuse Toohey and was publicly vilified for his accusations. After a guilty plea in 2006, Toohey was sentenced to five years in prison, but served only ten months before being released into home detention.

As Steve Krueger said in the Globe, unanswered questions linger!

**SELECTIVE CELIBACY?** An online version of the Catholic Register of Canada announced the ordination of Father Don Flumerfelt at St. Patrick's Church in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Formerly an Anglican priest, Flumerfelt, who has a wife and three children, left the Anglican Church to become a Catholic. He was ordained after Bishop Croteau petitioned the Pope during his 15-minute audience in Rome last fall; permission to ordain Flumerfelt was granted on the spot.

James Lynn, the parish leader at a small mission outside Yellowknife who left the priesthood to marry many years ago, noted that although he leads Eucharistic services with a pre-consecrated host, he can no longer celebrate Mass. Bishop Croteau noted in a pastoral letter that for a "Protestant minister becoming a Catholic priest there is a continuous march of faith. With the Catholic priest who has renounced his vow there is a break in the journey of faith."

Internationally the Catholic Church has ordained hundreds of married priests from other Christian faiths.

*(Editor's note: Does requesting laicization equal renouncing a vow? What about "you are a priest forever" Hebrews 7:7?)*



# OTHER VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

By Joanne Blair

GREAT NEWS...Two VOTF affiliates are now working directly with their dioceses to help restore credibility by implementing accountability. Following three embezzlement scandals, one amounting to \$8.5 million, Bishop Gerald Barbarito, Palm Beach (FL) County responded with a plan to strengthen financial responsibility and give parishioners more oversight. His plan includes independent biennial audits, quarterly and annual financial reports, a finance council with access to forensic accountants and a rule that all irregularities be reported to the police. In its efforts to restore credibility, the diocese has worked with **PALM BEACH COUNTY (FL) VOTF** members.

And, in **BROOKLYN (NY) VOTF** members, previously banned from meeting on Church property, were able to persuade the Diocese of Brooklyn to overthrow the ban. The group now works with diocesan officials on parish administration, finances and Catholic schools. They are also responding to the diocese's call for help in setting up parish councils at every Church in the diocese.

**VOTF ORMOND (FL)** met at 12:30 March 25 in the Ormond Library, which they laughingly refer to as "Our Lady of the Library" ( they are not allowed to meet on church property). Joe and Joan Koechler, former priest and nun who were released from their vows and married in the church, spoke about their experiences and perspectives.

**VOTF-TUCSON AR** has issued a press release which states that they are "extremely disappointed and saddened by Bishop Gerald Kicanas's outrageous action of denying permission to Detroit Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton to speak in Tucson." The statement concluded, "The leaders of VOTF-Tucson stand in solidarity with Call to Action."

Father Pat Connor will speak on "Birth Control, Conscience, and Holy Communion" at the April 12th meeting of **VOTF-UNION COUNTY, NJ** . The group will meet at 7:30 P.M. at the United Methodist Church in Westfield, their regular meeting place.

Also on April 12, **WA VOTF** (Winchester area, MA) will meet to hear Father Bill Clark of Holy Cross College discuss his book, "A Voice of Their Own: The Authority of the Local Parish."

**VOTF-LONG ISLAND NY** will host its fourth Faith Convention at the Huntington-Hilton in Melville on April 14. The daylong affair will feature David Gibson speaking on: "The Rule of Benedict: What the Future Holds for Catholics and this Pope", Sr. Camille d'Arienzo on "Preaching: A Ministry in Distress" and Richard Sipe on "Learning from Our History: and How to Protect Against Abusers." The program begins at 9 A.M. and ends at 3:00 P.M. with a Liturgy of the Word.

## FOLLOW THE MONEY: FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2007

PRESENTED BY  
THE ALOYSIUS P. KELLEY, S.J. CHAIR OF CATHOLIC STUDIES, FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY And VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL,  
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT  
OAK ROOM, BARONE CENTER FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY

The conference opens registration at 9:30 am and follows with presentations on "Our Role in Financial Accountability," "The Money Trail: Financial Management and Mismanagement in the Diocese of Bridgeport," "The Edifice Complex: From the Stable to the Cathedral" and "You and Your Money...As People of God."

There will be ample time for discussion, lunch will be provided and the conference ends with a not-to-be-missed Mass of Hope in the Egan Chapel of St Ignatius Loyola

# **A novel approach to financial accountability...**

## **Restoring faith in church requires change in laws**

By Tom Gallagher, Copyright © 2007. All rights reserved. Used with permission of author.

The Catholic parish is the primary institution where the church lives out its life. "The parish is a beacon that radiates the light of faith," Pope Benedict XVI said last month. "Thus it meets the most profound and authentic desires of the human heart, giving meaning and hope to the lives of individuals and families."

The Holy Father speaks of an ideal. The reality in the US's 19,000 parishes is, unfortunately, quite different. Far too often, the local institution designed to radiate the light of faith is dulled by structures that impede the church's mission.

The evidence is abundant: In the past 50 years weekly Mass attendance has plummeted to the low thirty percent range, vocations to the priesthood and religious life have been decimated, a priest culture has emerged that has enabled illicit and criminal behavior to exist, and the moral authority of bishops is at a near record low. The sexual abuse scandal alone has cost the church over \$1 billion. Four dioceses have raced to civil courts seeking bankruptcy protection. The actual opportunity costs – the money that could have, should have, been spent to further the mission of the church -- are beyond calculation.

There are, of course, many reasons for parish decline. One thing, however, is clear: Lay executives responsible for this kind of performance would be fired and a massive reorganization would take place, but not so in the Catholic church.

The parish governance model is broken and in urgent need of an overhaul.

Parishes are the creation of two distinct legal systems – state civil law and Canon Law. Under Canon Law, the laity act as simple advisors to the pastor, who controls all parish authority. As a result, the civil character of parishes is woefully underdeveloped. The application of state civil law is depressed, superseded, and replaced by church law.

From a civil law perspective, the Catholic parish governance model contradicts almost every reasonable and prudent course of action found in the secular world. No one would ever vest all civil law authority, directly or indirectly, in the hands of a single person. Since church law will not change

in the foreseeable future, we should look to state civil law to solve some of the non-canonical problems parishes face.

In Connecticut, parishes are created under a state civil law known as the "Religious Corporation Act." The Catholic church subsection of the Act is incredibly thin in terms of what the state requires from the parish corporation. There is token representation of two lay trustees appointed on an annual basis. The ex-officio or permanent members of the parish corporation are the bishop, the vicar general (almost always a priest) and the parish pastor (always a priest).

According to the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the candidate for the priesthood swears an oath of obedience to the bishop. The bishop appoints pastors, removes pastors, re-assigns pastors and takes the lead in defrocking priests. Given that the bishop controls the two ex-officio members of the parish corporation, the vicar general and the pastor, and that the two lay trustees are removable annually, the bishop de facto controls the parish corporation.

In operation, it is simply impossible for the bishop and vicar general to attend bi-monthly or monthly meetings of each parish corporation. The bishop, therefore, effectively controls the parish in absentia. Meanwhile, conflicts abound. The bishop, for example, needs the cooperation and support of pastors to raise money through the bishop's annual appeal. The diocesan funding source, the "cathradradicum" or tax on ordinary parish revenue, funds the daily operations of the diocese. In addition, the bishop lacks the practical ability to "fire" pastors for managerial lapses, except for the most egregious and potentially criminal practices. The conflicts of interest and the inability to remove pastors for managerial lapses are fatal impediments to authentic and permanent reform.

The third problem is the limited role, and number, of lay trustees. It is often the case that trustees are friends of the pastor and not particularly competent in parish management. The primary duty of trustees is to sign a single form signifying that an annual meeting of the parish

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## **A novel approach to financial accountability**

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corporation has taken place among the bishop, vicar general, pastor and the trustees. The ability to remove lay trustees annually impedes the work of trustees.

Similar structures are present throughout the US. Any reform of the governance structure of Catholic parishes needs to begin with an immediate reform of state laws that vest, directly or de facto, all civil law authority in a single person.

### *A Proposal: Change State Laws:*

Citizens of goodwill should seek well-run Catholic parish corporations. Parishes serve as anchors to their communities. The Catholic faithful and state legislators need to step forward and craft changes to the Religious Corporation Act that produce a governing structure that allows for the best of our vocations to the ordained, married and single life to blossom in an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Any new governance model needs to preserve certain elements of the current model, while it changes others. A governance structure is needed which protects the bishops, pastors and priests from overreaching laity, while the laity need a structure which makes room for real participation and protection from overreaching bishops, pastors and priests.

It is critical to separate out the key duties that the bishop must always control from those he does not. These "reserved powers of the bishop" should include theology, catechetics, sacraments and the appointment and removal of pastors and priests.

The "general administrative powers" that each parish corporation board should control include the creation of a strategic plan; budgets and spending policies; lay personnel policies; establishment of bylaws, financial controls, and annual audits; and creation of board committees in such areas as social outreach, risk management, investments and finance.

With respect to the general administrative matters, each member of the parish corporation board would have one vote irrespective of the member's vocation. As a result, for all general administrative matters the lay members of the

board (at least seven lay trustees, if not more), along with the bishop or his representative, and the pastor, would each have one vote.

Thoughtfully proposed changes to the state law would dramatically improve parish governance because key administrative duties become dispersed among many talented people, not concentrated entirely in the pastor. This would be a tremendous benefit to overtaxed pastors and priests. In this way, the bishop, pastor and the laity become co-responsible for the parish, enabling all stakeholders to have a fitting role aligned with the gifts of each vocation and enlivened by a right to vote.

(Tom Gallagher, a graduate of Catholic University's law school, is a former parish trustee, Wall Street securities lawyer who advised colleges, universities, hospitals and multi-state health systems on financial transactions and a former assistant general counsel of a publicly-traded, financial insurance company where he managed legal risk on a transaction and policy basis. He is an investment management professional and also runs a start-up company. He lives in Riverside, CT.)

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