

# Our Voice

An E-Newsletter for Those Interested and Involved in The Voice of The Faithful • Connecticut  
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## VOTF NAMES BISHOPS WHO SHOULD RESIGN

(From the VOTF National Website - Published January 7, 2009)

Seven years after news of clergy sexual abuse exploded in the United States, a new crisis looms in Ireland. Clearly the Church has not yet addressed each abuse and the culture that made it possible. It is time for the leaders who enabled so much abuse to step aside.

Voice of the Faithful calls for an examination of conscience by Church leaders worldwide -- and the resignations of those whose actions led to the endangerment of children by sexual predators among the clergy.

Catholic bishops and superiors of religious orders who hold or have held positions of authority should examine their consciences in light of Canon Law 1389. "A person who, through culpable negligence, unlawfully and with harm to another, performs or omits an act of ecclesiastical power or ministry of office, is to be punished by a just penalty." We call on our leaders who failed to protect the well-being of our children by knowingly and secretly transferring predator priests from parish to parish without informing the laity to resign their current office or position of authority on or before June 30, 2009.

It is our position that in cases where bishops, despite the weight of evidence against them, refuse to resign their offices, Pope Benedict XVI should request their resignations. As examples, we cite five current bishops whose records from public documents, court testimony and multiple survivor accounts clearly indicate "culpable negligence...with harm to another..." and thus has a clear obligation to the Body of Christ to resign. Cardinal Francis George, Cardinal Roger Mahoney, Bishop William F. Murphy, Bishop John McCormack and Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk. In addition, Cardinal Bernard Law should resign from all the ecclesial positions he currently holds in Rome.

Attached is a document from VOTF describing in detail our position on this issue, including why we believe the cardinals and archbishops identified should resign. (On the VOTF website click on document to read the full and detailed account!)

### *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.*

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#### **HELPFUL LINKS:**

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

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

**Bridgeport VOTF:** [www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.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)

**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)

# THE DISHONORING OF MY REGIMENT!

By the Rev. Harry J. Byrne, J.C.D., Retired Chancellor-Archdiocese of New York (A priest's frank look at the Church's handling of the sexual abuse crisis-- printed with permission of the author.)

My formerly honored regiment of Catholic priests has been disgraced by an infiltration of pedophiles into its ranks. I and my colleagues bear that dark shadow to this day. Its cause: the failure of many bishops to obey Canon 1395. Yes, it's that simple! The canon orders punishment for a priest who sexually abuses a minor. Punishment, not therapy! Much less secret reassignment with damage to more children! Furthermore, no bishop has been punished by his superiors, as required by Canon 1389, for failure to enforce Canon 1395. Regardless of good intentions, bishops and their superiors are responsible for the effects of what they do or fail to do under their job descriptions. A tiny minority of priests abused children; an estimated two thirds of the nation's bishops secretly reassigned abusers.

Pope Benedict XVI and his predecessor, John Paul II, have neither shown that he understands the problem. If a problem is not understood, it cannot be solved. Both popes saw the problem as residing in individual priests. No finger is pointed at a bishop. Benedict in Australia recently declared, "I ask all of you to support and assist your bishops in combating this evil." Sorry! Benedict has it backwards. He should ask the bishops to listen to and work with the laity. They understand the source of the problem; our bishops, for the most part, do not! In his trip to the U.S... Benedict apologized for the pain caused by the sexual abuse phenomenon. He declared that it had "been badly handled". Use of the passive voice enabled him to avoid saying by whom it had been badly handled.

John Paul II also seems to have had it backwards. On April 23, 2002, addressing the U.S. Cardinals, who had been summoned to Rome, he spoke of "how the Church will help society to understand and deal with the crisis." Its arrogance, unintended as it may be, betrays the depth of his misunderstanding: it was society through its media, district attorneys, and trial lawyers that had forced the Church to face its own problem! Later, he would reward Cardinal Bernard Law, driven from Boston and his priests and people as poster-boy for those bishops reassigning abusers, to a prestigious church in Rome, with a six-figure salary, and seats on nine governing commissions!

John Paul spoke of "the great harm done by some priests..." Regarding their superiors, he said "...many are offended at the way in which the Church's leaders ARE

PERCEIVED to have acted..." In the Pope's mind, in the clericalism cast of mind, he and bishops are immunized from direct criticism. John Paul then proceeded to call for "a purification of the entire Catholic community." Pardon me, please! Do not dare to deflect blame on the Catholic community. It belongs on the few miscreant priests and the many miscreant bishops. It is these latter who have been judged responsible, not just by the press, but by our civil courts and judicial system to the tune of \$2 billion, not the bishop's' own money, but the contributions of the faithful!

The clerical mentality - trying constantly to project an ideal, even if false, image of Church - is the underlying cause of thousands of young people damaged, \$2 billion shot, three dioceses bankrupted, and now, in the latest phase, innocent priests becoming victims of allegations of incidents two or three decades past, inadequately investigated by their bishops.

The U.S. Bishops' Dallas Charter has been a great success in its programs to protect children by vetting personnel and developing educational and awareness programs. As to its provisions to remove allegedly abusive priests, it has been severely criticized by the bishops' own National Review Board, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., and eminent canonists for its lack of proportionality - a pat on the bottom treated equally as serial rape, the "one strike, you're out" rule, and the abandonment of any statute of limitations. The bishop is constituted arresting officer, prosecutor, judge, and appellate bench - an unworkable combination of conflicting roles. Many instances of innocent priests being removed are now surfacing. Appeals to the U.S. Conference of Bishops have been made, without success, to revisit and amend the Chapter's flawed, purportedly judicial structure. Do the bishops fear that the Church would appear to victims' groups and the public as backing off its initial determination to reform? If so, here again, clericalism's cast of mind puts a desirable Church image ahead of the reality of truth and justice.

The Church will begin to solve its problems and resolve its tensions, when, and only when, clericalism and its adherents reverse priorities and place truth and justice ahead of institutional image. (For more articles by Father Byrne, go to his website at [larchstar@aol.com](mailto:larchstar@aol.com) - you'll find some interesting reading!)

## OTHER VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

By Joanne Blair

**VOTF of Greater Bridgeport** will feature Carmine Galasso, author of "Crosses: Portrait of Clergy Abuse" at their February 5 meeting, which will take place at The First Congregational Church on the Green, 5 Park Street, Norwalk, at 7:30 p.m. VOTF has met at this church since they were banned from meeting in their parishes by Bishop Lori a number of years ago.

A video program featuring a talk by Australian Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, author of "Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church" will begin the winter meetings of **Coastal Delmarva's VOTF**. The meeting was held at 7 p.m. January 28 at the Ocean View Town Hall. Their next meeting falls on Ash Wednesday when Father Paul Mast will speak on "Voices of the Faithful in the Pauline Year - Embracing St. Paul as a Voice for Hope and Healing in a Post-scandal Church."

**VOTF New Jersey** members gathered at the chapel in Seminary Hall, Drew University on January 14 to hear Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., discuss her latest book, "Quest for the Living God." Johnson is Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University and the recipient of numerous awards, including the John Courtney Murray Award of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Members of **VOTF Santa Barbara** continue their ongoing discussion of the Gospel of Mark on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The meetings, which began this year on January 15, will continue through March 15, with each one featuring a different guest speaker.

**VOTF of Southwest Florida** has a number of different activities under way. Monthly meetings are held at St. John the Evangelist Church in the Claussen Center, North Naples from 2 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., giving members the opportunity to attend the 5 p.m. Mass at St. John's. Additionally, they presented a Speakers Forum at 7 p.m., Thursday, January 29, at the Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church in Naples. Robert Blair Kaiser spoke on "An Action Plan for Citizenship in the Church." continued in next column

## Yet Another Fearful Silencing

By John Chuchman

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has instructed American Jesuit theologian Fr. Roger Haight to refrain from teaching and publishing while he works with the Jesuit order to clarify his views.

Haight's theories on Christ, the Holy Spirit and non-Christian religions raise a complex cluster of issues, but at bottom the perceived danger is clear: the idea that while Christianity may be true for Christians, other religions are equally true for their adherents.

In his controversial book *Jesus: Symbol of God*, Haight argued that while Christ is the preeminent "symbol" and "mediator" of God for Christians, that claim should not exclude the possibility that other "symbols" of God may be valid in other religious traditions.

For critics, that amounts to saying "one religion is as good as another." Haight and his supporters, however, insist it's simply a deep truth about God's activity outside porters, the visible bonds of Christianity.

In a 2003 interview with NCR, Haight argued that his pluralist reading of non-Christian religions deserves to be recognized by the church as an "orthodox" view, even if it's a "minority position."

# Spread the Word

### Other Voices continued

Continuing its schedule of weekly Monday meetings (except for holidays) **WAVOTF, Winchester Area, MA**, discussed "Where have we been, where are we going?" on January 5, their first meeting of the New Year. On January 12, they took up part 1 of "A Conversation About Celibacy"; Part 2 will be presented on February 2. On February 9, Jessica Lillie, PR Director of VOTF, will address the group, followed by Svea Fraser speaking on "RCIA in a Post-Crisis Church" on February 23.

**(Question for readers...IS the Church post scandal and post crisis?  
Please send your opinions to [ejblair@comcast.net](mailto:ejblair@comcast.net) for publication in the next issue of Our Voice.)**

# GREATER BRIDGEPORT VOTF FEATURES TWO TOP NOTCH SPEAKERS

By Joanne Blair

Margaret Farley, Sister of Mercy and Professor Emeritus at Yale Divinity School, spoke on "Forgiveness in the Service of Justice" to a spellbound audience at the December 4th meeting of VOTF of Greater Bridgeport. Farley spoke of the importance of forgiveness, noting that it is one of the spiritual works of mercy. Quoting John 23, she emphasized that the message of forgiveness is the Christian method in its entirety. Pointing out those whom Jesus challenged and judged were only the self righteous, she noted that he rejected no one else, even those who betrayed him. With the aside that Christians and Christian churches have been judging, she spoke of the meaning of forgiveness, citing Dorothy Day as someone who forgave when attacked, and pointed to the truth commissions as an example where "sometimes forgiveness became possible". Farley stayed to respond to all questions and ideas that were posed to her at the very successful session.

The January 8th meeting featured Paul Scarborough, co-president of CTA-USA, who discussed "The Changing Face of Catholicism" while emphasizing that the group which embraces these changes will be the group that survives. He described the effort of CTA to reject racism by noting that the organization brought in black speakers to discuss racism at their 2000 conference and, by 2004, an anti-racism team came into being and started to make changes. There was a concerted effort to not only attract young people ("next gen") but to invite them to share their views with the top leaders. His basic point was that an organization could not be static and continue to be successful! His talk brought forth many to-the point questions, which Scarborough answered enthusiastically.



## RESPONSE TO THE VATICAN

(From "IN THE VINEYARD" December 08)

VOTF's Janet Hauter posted the following response to a recent article in the Daily Herald Chicago NW Suburban edition

In a recent quote from the secretary of state for the Vatican, Cardinal Tarcisco Bertone, I read the following ; "The world's financial crisis is the result of greed and an example of what happens when God, basic rights and the common good are ignored." I have only one question: Does the same standard apply to the greatest current scandal in the history of the Catholic Church (where lies, deceits, cover-ups, significant settlements to avoid total disclosure of personnel files and enabling acts of pedophile protection occurred in lieu of protecting our vulnerable children)?

The "good cardinal" is quick to point out our country's flaws but has he examined his organization's conscience recently?  
(Right on Janet Hauter!)

## WORDS OF WISDOM

Spoken by **Oscar Romero**, Martyred Bishop

THE VIOLENCE we preach is not  
the violence of the sword,  
the violence of hatred.

It is the violence of love,  
of brotherhood,  
the violence that wills to beat weapons  
into sickles for work.

*November 27, 1977*

God's reign is already present on earth in mystery.  
When the Lord comes, it will be brought to perfection.

That is the hope that inspires Christians.  
We know that every effort to better society,  
especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained,  
is an effort that God blesses, that God wants,  
that God demands of us.

*March 11, 1980...spoken moments before his assassination in a San Salvador hospital*

# VOTF Calls Op-Ed by Judge Michael Merz Harmful Boston Globe Op-Ed Raises Questions of Accuracy

(VOTF National press release)

Voice of the Faithful disputes the conclusions reported recently in a Boston Globe Op-Ed article by Judge Michael Merz, who chairs the National Review Board for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Catholic bishops complicit in the sexual abuse crisis do indeed need to resign or be replaced. Unlike Judge Merz, we at VOTF do not assume that those responsible for coverups and scandal are in any way qualified to lead the cleanup.

Judge Merz's remarks are especially troubling in light of the requirements for his Review Board to monitor the compliance of the bishops with the USCCB's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Self-reporting by diocesan officials is not the same as verifiable assessment, and it is troubling to learn that the USCCB regards such unverified results as evidence of "forceful" response by the bishops of their commitment to the programs. True commitment should include verifiable participation and independently audited results in all dioceses and penalties for those bishops who do not comply.

We also know from our experiences at the parish and diocesan level that child safety training, once completed, is often not repeated and seldom emphasized. Again, this hit-and-miss approach to child protection does not speak of a "forceful" response despite Judge Merz's assurances.

Finally, we do not agree with Judge Merz that the Church is demonstrating an "unrelenting...quest to ensure that all children" are safe when the president of the USCCB, Cardinal Francis George, was forced this year to acknowledge serious failures in his own diocese to immediately remove priests accused of molesting children.

Many of our members work tirelessly to address the issue of child safety and protection of young people with the church. We wish the bishops could do the same. They do not.

We are deeply disappointed by the words of Judge Merz. We hope he remembers that the crisis is not over and the work is not done.

(Three cheers for VOTF's courage in speaking out on those issues which need to be addressed... even if they might be uncomfortable for Church officials!)

## SAVE THE DATE

### "Do This in Memory of Me" The Future of the Eucharist

### 7th Annual VOTF Bridgeport Conference

In conjunction with Fairfield University  
Department of Religious Studies

**Saturday, March 28**  
**9am to 4pm (closing liturgy)**  
**Fairfield University**



## Spread the word.

*Invite a friend to the next meeting.*

# AROUND THE CHURCH - NEWS IN BRIEF

By Joanne Blair

## Is the Church on the attack?...

It recently excommunicated Father Roy Bourgeois for participating in the ordination of a woman priest. Bourgeois was ordered to recant his belief supporting the ordination of women to the priesthood or face excommunication. Bourgeois responded by pointing out a 1976 report by the Pontifical Biblical Commission concluding that there is no justification for excluding women from the priesthood. He also noted that nearly 500 priests have sexually abused more than 12,000 children and many bishops, who were aware of the abuse, remained silent. None, priests or bishops, were excommunicated.

And, in Portland, Maine, Bishop Richard Malone has threatened to punish an outspoken advocate for sexual abuse victims. Paul Kendrick recently received a letter from the vicar general which had attached a "canonical precept" from the bishop mandating that he "abstain from all verbal and written communication and physical contact with me". He is also not allowed to be present in the same building with the bishop or within 500 feet of him in public places. Disobeying these orders means Kendrick will lose his right "to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church."

A ban on teaching in Catholic institutions is obviously not enough punishment for Jesuit theologian Roger Haight, according to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The CDF has added further punishment, forbidding Haight to write on theology or to teach ANYWHERE, even non-Catholic institutions.

## RICO LAWSUIT AGAINST CHURCH FILED IN CONNECTICUT

By Joanne Blair followed by Commentary from Barbara Dorris, National Outreach Director of SNAP

At the end of December, a New London lawyer brought a racketeering case against the Catholic Church in Connecticut. The complaint charged the Norwich Diocese with conspiracy to cover up sexual abuse of

children by priests. "Jane Doe" of Connecticut alleged abuse by Father Thomas Shea in 1976. Accused of sexually abusing at least 16 girls in 11 parishes, Shea was transferred numerous times from the first complaint in the 1950's until he was placed on leave in 1983. Six other priests were cited for abusing youngsters; in all cases they were transferred to new parishes after abuse complaints had been made against them. The abuse continues. The lawsuit states that former bishop, Daniel Reilly, and the current vicar general, Thomas McBride, should be held accountable under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) for conspiring to cover up the criminal behavior of abusive priests. (Info from the December 31 Hartford Courant article by Elizabeth Hamilton.)

The very same day Barbara Dorris, National Outreach Director of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests), released the following statement:

We applaud this brave victim for taking action to expose the corruption and duplicity in the Church hierarchy. We hope her courage will inspire others who are suffering in shame, silence and self-blame to step forward, get help, call police, warn parents and protect kids.

We also applaud new legal approaches to uncovering deeply held secrets about predator priests and their complicit colleagues. What has been tried has been, at best, only very partially successful in shedding light on the on-going cover-ups. We welcome new avenues that may help bring healing and prevention.

Hundreds of thousands of clergy sex crimes were successfully concealed for decades. A key reason this happened is because the church is run by an ancient, rigid, secretive, all-male monarchy. This remains true today. And, until this changes, it's naïve to expect real reform. The claims of alleged progress by the Norwich Diocese public relations man are simply false.

The Catholic hierarchy touts its abuse policies and procedures. In reality, painfully little has changed regarding how church bureaucrats deal with child sex crimes.

*(SNAP is the nation's oldest and largest support group for clergy abuse victims; it includes those who were molested by religious figures of all denominations, including nuns, rabbis, bishops and Protestant ministers as well as priests.)*