

# Our Voice

An E-Newsletter for Those Interested and Involved in The Voice of The Faithful • Connecticut  
March 2008 Issue Number 23

## TO HIS HOLINESS, POPE BENEDICT XVI...

Most Holy Father: In your own words, "today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a just war." Yet, during your upcoming visit to the United States, you are planning to meet with President George W. Bush, whose empty justification for the violence in Iraq lead to increasing numbers of dead, injured and displaced people. Iraqi civilians still endure the "continual slaughter" which you described in your 2007 Easter Sunday address.

Shortly before the U.S. invaded Iraq, you rightly declared that "there were no sufficient reasons to unleash a war." You also called attention to the terrible new technologies which cause indiscriminate destruction. Five years later, how much more reason you have to call for an immediate end to this war, and to refuse to meet with the President of the United States until that is accomplished.

If you kneel in grief and outrage before the cross of the tortured Christ, can you offer your blessing to a head of government who excuses the most terrible abuses of human minds and bodies as "legal"?

If meet with him you must, then, meet as a prophet should - issue a warning and an invitation to repentance. Courtesy cannot be used as an evasion of our biblical faith. Ezekiel was repeatedly reminded of his responsibility to admonish those doing evil if he desired to escape sharing in the responsibility for their sins. Shouldn't any of us who recognize the horror of what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan be condemned if we are silent?

You are scheduled to be in Washington, D.C., on the anniversary of your birth. We feel sure that you will be thinking of the countless children of Iraq who never reached their fifth birthday. There are many, both within the Church and outside of it, who long for your voice to speak for those innocent dead and - face to face with those whose policies denied all respect of their lives - demand that the killing stop. We are, in faithful hope...

(Attached was a list of 455 signatures, gathered as of February 22.)

### *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:**

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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)

**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 NATIONAL RESPONSE TO TOM DOYLE'S ARTICLE

(Be sure to visit the VOTF web-site for the many comments on this statement.)

Dear Tom:

I am writing on behalf of VOTF's Board of Trustees, most of which you personally know. You also know that we all hold you in high regard and are forever grateful for your leadership on sexual abuse, your support for survivors, and your help to VOTF, as we have struggled to respond to the ongoing crisis in our church...we do agree that VOTF can do better, but we do disagree on some important points.

VOTF has been a movement of women and men who believe that the Catholic Church is more than a mere human institution. Our church has certainly never been perfect and it has always needed reform. We Vatican II Catholics have learned that anew as we witnessed the continuing failures of the institutional church.

It has been our conviction that we should do our best to reform the church by affirming our shared responsibility for its life and work here and now, most especially in response to the corruption revealed in the sex abuse crisis. We continue to believe that we should work to strengthen the voice of the laity in the governance and guidance of the church and claim the laity's rightful place in decisions being made every day. Our members and our leaders do not believe that the church will be best served by giving up on Vatican II reforms. Your suggestion that such efforts are a distraction from the pressing work of reform is a judgment with which we respectfully, but profoundly disagree.

We fear that your call to abandon effort to influence church decision-making amounts to a surrender of the church, its parishes, and its ministries to the evils of clericalism and hierarchical power. We have had similar disagreements with friends in other Catholic reform organizations, and within our own membership. We, respectfully, yet profoundly, reject the proposal to turn away from the existing structure, or to confine our work to the one goal of advocacy for survivors of abuse, important as that advocacy has been, and will continue to be, to VOTF's mission. From the start, we have argued that we serve

the interests of survivors by keeping the faith and trying as best we can to change the church.

Survivor support was the foundational motivation of VOTF, but it was always connected with support for priests of integrity and working for structural reform. The three goals existed together from the outset of VOTF. They are the three children of the same Catholic parents. Call us foolish, if you will, but we will not choose among them.

We believe that the Catholic Church, its institutions, and ministries, built over generations by our American Catholic forebears, are worth fighting for, even if our ordained leaders resist our efforts. The desire to achieve justice for survivors of sexual abuse also opened our eyes to the underlying evils of clericalism. The root problem is the clerical nature of the institution, and restriction of power to the ordained. This condition was not always true, nor is it likely to last until eternity. We can shape a different future, but only if we make the effort to do so with intelligence, imagination and perseverance. Good people differ over how best to carry out our call to change the church, and we need to remain in conversation as we work as best we can to build up a movement of genuine reform.

Call us naïve, Tom. We have been called worse. Call us misguided, if you will, but we must endure on the course that seems to be right for us. The laity's time will come one day, and ours will be a better church when that day arrives. Until then, our resolute choice is to continue on the path that we have chosen since our founding and is guided by our 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.

Per our earlier conversation, I look forward to an opportunity shortly to meet with you and discuss your views in more detail and share ours with you. Given that many VOTF members have read and commented on your recent statements about VOTF and its future, we also intend to circulate this response with our members.

Sincerely,

**Bill Casey, Chair of the Board of Trustees**

# CALENDAR

## SAVE THE DATES

**Friday, April 11, 7:30pm**

Rev. Richard McBrien will speak on

### **FAITH AND POLITICS IN OUR TIME**

At Hotchkiss School Chapel  
Lakeville, CT, Main entrance on Rte 112

**FREE**, open to the public, followed by reception.  
Call 860-435-2659 or 860-534-0502 for preferred  
seating. Donations accepted.

**Wednesday, April 16, 7:30pm**

Aquinas Center at UCONN  
Presents

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

who will discuss

### **OUTLAWING WAR: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME**

At the Aquinas Center

46 North Eagleville Rd., Storrs (north end of Campus)

**FREE**, open to the public, followed by reception

**Saturday, April 26, 9am-4pm**

Greater Bridgeport VOTF 6th Annual Conference

### **WHO OWNS THE CHURCH?**

9:30 am (Registration) to 4 p.m. (Closing Mass)

At Fairfield University

Father Gerald Fogarty, S.J.

Keynotes with "Trustees and Trusteeship in the  
American Church"

Paul Lakeland

follows with "A Theological Perspective"  
(Further info at [www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org))

## **FROM THE EDITOR...**

*This month's issue is rich with opinions from many readers...even a letter to the Pope with suggestions for his upcoming visit with the President! During my daily Google searches I came upon an article regarding the visit from the blog of Monsignor Harry J. Byrne, a retired priest who gave his okay to quote from it and invited one and all to visit his website at [www.harryjbyrne.blogspot.com](http://www.harryjbyrne.blogspot.com)*

**"WHAT SIGNAL DOES THE POPE BRING TO NEW YORK?"** Benedict XVI will address the United Nations in New York on April 19. On the next day he will celebrate Mass at Yankee Stadium. Security will be tight...ticket holders must arrive very early.

There is also some static in the airways...no lay eucharistic ministers will be in the service...ordained deacons will not participate...only priests will distribute Holy Communion. Appeals have gone out to enlist 500 priests for this purpose... More than a little discomfort has been reported among deacons...

Further ruffled feelings have resulted from an invitation from Mayor Bloomberg to Benedict to a reception at Gracie Mansion. Also invited were leading representative Protestant, Jewish and Muslim clergy. When the pope's advance men indicated...that Benedict would prefer to be the sole religious figure, the invitation was withdrawn. This lack of ecumenical feeling and the exclusion of deacons and lay ministers from the distribution of the Eucharist at the papal Mass contribute to an uneasy feeling in some quarters...

Do not these and other signs of Rome's tendency towards intensifying clericalism add to the polarity of views within the Church? With Rome ready to enter into dialogue with various branches of Protestantism and the Jewish community, would it not be helpful, if not mandatory, for the hierarchy to enter into dialogue with those Catholics who are put off by the lack of transparency in hierarchical management and the practical exclusion of the laity from roles already accorded to them by canon law.

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## Reader's Comments

TO THE EDITOR

**Well, you have struck a chord in me today!** In response to Tom Doyle. Sadly, I am in 100% accord with this piece.

Andrea, in my opinion, we have passed the intersection for change. Like those in Martin Luther's time, we need to find a community or a leader willing to step into a new beginning.

My remarks: over twenty years ago, while in parish conversations about the role of women and married priests, I was struck with the truth of living the gospel in each moment. My husband was losing his battle with cancer and as a permanent deacon tried to serve when he was well enough. My lay leader roles had been set aside to serve beside him. The point here is that I realized that neither of us would live long enough to see the change and justice being cried for in our Church. Here we are twenty years later and the cry is the same, only with more clarity. Unfortunately, the plain and simple truth is that the hierarchy has bought into the power ladder and the way of Jesus has fallen far behind!

Diane Schultz  
Hamden CT

### REACTING TO THE FEBRUARY 2008 EDITION OF "OUR VOICE"

To the Editor:

Dr. Leslie Lothstein's remarks in the subject issue are telling. He is Director of Psychology at Hartford's Institute of Living with a long history of treating priests with psychological disorders. He said: "2% of priests are celibate, 18% try to be celibate and 80% are not celibate", and also described the isolation of priests which leaves them open to substance abuse problems. Richard Sipe, a former Jesuit priest and Psychologist who has treated several thousand priests over three decades, makes similar observations.

In a VOTF website link, Fr. Richard McBrien says: "In such a pool of men for whom lifelong celibacy is not a problem there is bound to be a disproportionate number of "sexually immature or sexually dysfunctional

candidates.....opening the door of the priesthood to married men would broaden the pool of quality candidates". And in his recent letter to VOTF, Fr. Tom Doyle states emphatically: "As long as the clerical-celibate system remains basically untouched, there will always be victims of sexually dysfunctional priests and spiritually dysfunctional bishops."

This is all obvious to anyone beyond puberty. It is also the prime cause for a priest shortage that threatens to destroy the Church. But for arcane reasons, Hierarchy policy makers disagree. They cite surveys to show married men abuse more than single men. Of course that is true: for in general society, most children live under the roof of married men who are not clergy, and those children are easy prey. The survey we have yet to see is the percentage of "celibate" ordained male clergy who abuse, compared with the percentage of ordained married male clergy who abuse. And we must also ask: why did the voracious secular media fail to uncover widespread abuse by Non-Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish clergy, who have always had the marriage option? If our Bishops and Priests were normal biological fathers and grandfathers, does anyone seriously believe they would tolerate child abusers in their midst, or would pay out one to two billion dollars (Fr. Tom Doyle's estimate) of hard earned laity donations in secret hush money to victims of abuse?

Christ chose married men to be his original 12 priests. It was his human hierarchy that changed it 1,100 years later by insisting on celibacy. What could possibly be more conservative than a return to his original choice for priests? Celibacy is not dogma and can be changed by a pen stroke. But when one goes beyond that bedrock theological stance and also calls for women priests, it postpones the day our church begins to heal. For it gives the conservative mindset all the excuse it needs to table the celibacy question for another century; and with the priest shortage as it is now, we don't have that long. The better option is to stress what is achievable and in the tradition of Christ, instead of what may appear theoretically perfect to some.

It is probable many priests believe celibacy must be discussed for the greater good of the church and are actually hoping a lay organization of mainstream Catholics like VOTF will bring pressure to bear, respectful pressure, but pressure nevertheless.

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## **EASTERN CT AFFILIATE SEEKS PARTICIPANTS FOR "NAGGING QUESTIONS" PROJECT**

Hello all, I think we have all had those nagging little questions which never seem to get answered, such as:

We are told that there is a shortage of priests yet so many American priests are in Rome or "studying" in Europe. Father Kevin Randal was at St. Joseph's in New London for a short time after being ordained. He is now part of the Vatican's Diplomatic Corps and posted to Slovenia. If there is a shortage, why does the bishop send his priests out of the country?...or

Richard Buongiorno no longer functions as a priest yet he has not been laicized and resides in Wallingford. Does he still get a pension or stipend from the bishop? Does he get any kind of medical plan or assistance from the Diocese of Norwich?...or

Thomas Shay was a priest who preyed on girls and women for his entire career and was protected by his bishop. He retired in a nursing home in CT. Who paid the nursing home bills? Was it the bishop? If so, what fund did the disbursements come from? Are the donors to the fund for retired clergy funding retirements for perverts?...or

We are told that the payouts for victims of sexual abuse came from "insurance." Have the insurance premiums gone up as a result of these payments? Who pays the premiums on the policies? Are the faithful in the pews funding the payments without being told?

I'm sure that you all have your pet nagging questions. Maybe, if we just put all our questions on one list, we can start asking the questions and, perhaps we'll get some answers. So, I'm asking each of you to send me your "pet" question or questions by return e-mail. The moderators, Jay and Holly Charbonneau, assisted by an ad hoc committee, will come up with a list which will be distributed to you and our members, for perusal and comment before publication.

We would like to take the time to do this right so if you could reply by March 24, it would be greatly appreciated. Send replies to [schady@juno.com](mailto:schady@juno.com)

Thanks,  
Steve Schady

**To the editor** continued from page 4

VOTF has two statements on their present website that appear in conflict: "We do not advocate the end of priestly celibacy", and: "Voice of the Faithful Calls Vatican to Review Mandatory Celibacy". They should summon the courage to state unambiguously: "We advocate the end of priestly celibacy". With that advocacy, it is also proper for VOTF to dialog with the Church on methods of paying for married priest's families, and increased pay for all priests. While priests should not seek the calling for the money, their present salaries are very inadequate. This is one more reason for a lack of seminary candidates, and Catholics must be more realistic on this issue. The improved salaries require a token weekly increase in donations by the average family.

I accept the traditional, hierarchical, non-democratic structure of our Church, for it was handed down from the time of Christ. But like most other large secular charities, the books of each Diocese should be audited annually by an outside CPA practice according to accepted accounting principles, and the results made public. If VOTF is heading in this direction now, I applaud them, for sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Sincerely,  
William W. Bitterli



**Spread  
the word.**

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

# OTHER VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

By Joanne Blair

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former lieutenant governor of Maryland, drew a crowd of 350 to the **Naples (FL) VOTF** Speakers Forum on February 26. Her well received talk centered around her book, "Failing America's Faithful: How Today's Churches are Mixing God with Politics and Losing Their Way." Denied both a Catholic and a Greek Orthodox platform, she was warmly welcomed by the Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church, North Naples. "We are happy to have them here. We are giving the space," announced The Rev. Thomas Harp.

**VOTF of the Diocese of Bridgeport (CT)** hosted a special daytime meeting on Saturday, March 8, from 10 to 2 at Christ Church in Greenwich (CT). The meeting featured Anne Barrett Doyle and Terry McKiernan, founders of Bishop Accountability of Waltham (MA) and attorney and abuse survivor, Helen McGonigle, in a timely update on the Catholic clergy sexual abuse crisis and its consequences. Bishop Accountability has been operating since 2003 and is a treasure trove of information on the crisis. After five years of existence the Bishop Accountability web site is a resource for

journalists, academics, filmmakers, attorneys and, most important, victims and their families. In 2007 there were 748,127 visitors to the site.

**VOTF Northern New Jersey** will sponsor "An Evening of Spirituality" featuring Michael Morwood on Wednesday, April 2 at St. Marks' Lutheran Church, 100 Hartar Road, Morristown. A 5:30 potluck supper will be followed by discussion and reflection from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

The VOTF group has also scheduled a meeting on May 21 with Australian Bishop Geoffrey Robinson who will join the audience in a discussion of his recent, highly publicized book "Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus." Information on time and place will be announced later; check the web site [www.votfnj.org](http://www.votfnj.org)

Another NJ affiliate, **VOTF Union County**, is presenting a discussion of "How Gay People View the Church" by Rev. Edwards at their April 3 meeting which will take place at First Methodist Church, 1 East Broad Street, Westfield (NJ).

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR-GREENWICH CITIZEN continued from page 9

How were Catholics fully informed about the Diocesan closing of the three nursing homes in 2006?

I agree in general with Msgr. Wissel when he states that 'we are sinners' and that all 'people are in process'. Msgr. Wissel knows that transformational change is offered through the process of reconciliation. Genuine reconciliation requires forgiveness, repentance and restitution as necessary steps. Without completing the steps, reconciliation is found wanting. Will Monsignor Wissel open St. Mary for prayer, discussion and witnessing around the issues raised in this letter to all who wish to respond prayerfully? Perhaps this could be a positive leadership step forward in his call for unity?

**John Marshall Lee,**

Chairperson- Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport

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## *From the Editor* continued from page 3

Exchanging ideas officially with those outside the Church is accepted by the hierarchy; but to exchange ideas officially with those within the Church as, e.g., VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL, CALL TO ACTION, WE ARE CHURCH, etc., is not only not accepted but positively rejected...Are these Catholic persons regarded by the hierarchy as excluded from dialogue? Since they are already Catholics, should they simply sit quietly and listen attentively to their bishops, while burying any questions that might enter their quizzical minds?

Does such a hierarchical attitude strengthen or diminish the feeling of fellowship and community? Does it encourage or dissuade membership in the Church?

(Good questions! **Joanne Blair**)

# Structural Change Is Happening

by Bill Carroll

The third goal of Voice of the Faithful, "working for structural change in the Church", has been a difficult one in which to see any progress. Perhaps this is due to the fact that "structural change" can mean different things to different people, and it can involve any and all of the levels of the Church's organization. VOTF has focused on the issues of financial transparency and increased lay leadership, mostly on the diocesan level. However, not much has happened in these areas, including in our own Archdiocese of Hartford.

One of the reasons for this lack of progress is the unwillingness of the bishops and pastors to change the ways in which dioceses and parishes have been run. Another reason is that groups like VOTF have been looking to the wrong people, the clergy, to initiate change in the Church.

Change will not take place in the Church from the top down. Rather, change begins at the grassroots level. Only slowly does change work its way up to the hierarchy. There are a number of examples of change that are taking place in the Church today on the local level, within the parishes and among the people. One concrete example of such change is the process of parish restructuring that has been initiated in the town of West Hartford.

The restructuring process was introduced several months ago with a meeting between the Archdiocesan Restructuring Committee and the clergy of the parishes in town. Next, there followed open meetings for parishioners in most of the parishes. Written reports from these meetings were given by the pastors to the committee. A meeting of the committee with a limited number of parish council members from each of the parishes was then held. The most recent step was an open meeting for any interested parishioners, at which a purely symbolic vote was taken to endorse a plan of linking the parishes in town into three sets of two parishes.

This process reveals a dramatic change that is brewing in the Church, in our archdiocese and in the parishes of West Hartford. It is a change that most people, including the archbishop and the clergy, do not recognize. That change involves the necessity of lay people in the parishes stepping forward into positions of leadership with real authority.

What gives me the confidence that this change will take place is the simple dynamics of management. A priest who is

pastor of two or more parishes - who must oversee the sacramental life, the spiritual life, the educational life, the institutional life (money and property) along with the various committees and the lay personnel of each parish - will not be able to do an adequate job by himself. He will need the help and support, guidance and encouragement, and active involvement of the members of each of the parishes.

This is real "structural change" taking place in the Church and in the parishes today. Lay people, either volunteer or paid, will have to step forward and take on positions of responsibility and leadership in each parish. The aging cadre of priests here in the Archdiocese of Hartford can no longer do the work necessary to run multiple parishes. By necessity, there will be opportunities for increased lay leadership. But the critical question is whether or not there will be lay people who are willing and prepared to take up these responsibilities.

Leadership in the parish will take many forms. There will be a need for leaders in the fields of liturgy (not just music), prayer and religious education, especially education for adults. Leaders will be needed to oversee the finances and the upkeep of the parish facilities. Leaders who can manage, supervise and evaluate the increasing number of lay people working for the parish will also be needed. All these areas were once the sole province of the clergy. But as the clergy become stretched further and further by responsibilities for multiple parishes, lay people who can speak with expertise and guide the parish in these areas will need to come forward.

Cultivating and training these kinds of leaders will take time and effort and should not be delayed until the official 'linking' of parishes takes place. The Archdiocese has set up some training programs for lay leaders, but there are few people taking advantage of them. It is up to groups of dedicated lay Catholics to take the initiative and start fostering lay leadership in our parishes.

What can the members of VOTF do in order to foster lay leadership in our parishes? There are a number of small projects, possibly coordinated by the local VOTF steering committees, which can help move the growth of lay leadership forward.

Several people could investigate and catalog the local and regional training programs that are available for parish ministers. They could then publicize the availability of these programs to the parishes in town. continued on page 8

## Structural Change continued from page 7

A small group could brainstorm ideas about the types of ministries that a parish will need in the future, using resources, such as those from the National Leadership Roundtable for Church Management (NLRCM), as a starting point for their discussions. They could interview pastors and lay people currently engaged in parish ministry to provide a reality check on their ideas.

Another group could arrange and schedule presentations by people who are already working in linked parishes, by people leading or attending parish ministry training programs, as well as by people with areas of expertise that might help a parish, such as business leaders and managers.

Individuals can be liaisons to their own pastors and parish councils or to the town-wide coordinating committee for parish councils, sharing with them the information gathered by the other groups.

Most importantly, individuals can encourage and support members of their own parish, who appear to have leadership potential, to step forward and offer their gifts and talents to the parish.

Structural change is coming to the Catholic Church, to the Archdiocese of Hartford and to the parishes of West Hartford. Some one, or some group, must step forward to initiate and encourage the process of preparations for this critical change. Unless there is adequate preparation, the leadership positions in our parishes may be filled by people who do not have the insight or the training required to lead at the parish level.



## LETTER TO THE STAMFORD ADVOCATE

(This letter, regarding the handling of the Father Moynihan scandal by the Bridgeport Diocese is printed with the consent of the author.)

The most shocking element in the Father Michael Moynihan saga is not his personal life decisions ("New Woes for Moynihan," Feb. 4), but rather the "complete surprise" and "we had no idea" reactions (that Father Moynihan is involved with the former parish choir director) by the Diocese of Bridgeport, and of course, the "judgment call" not to promptly disclose the diocese's decision last week to withdraw Moynihan's authorization to function as a priest.

One would think that pro-active and timely disclosures would be in the best interest of the people. To suggest that making an announcement from the altar was the driving force against immediate disclosure is an excuse worthy of a grade schooler. A simple press release would have worked last week as it worked this week.

We Catholics are adults. Stuff happens. We can handle it. Treat us like adults, but please don't think for us.

Thank God for secular newspaper reporters in Greenwich, Stamford and New York City. Thank God also for the U.S. Attorney's Office. These good people - public servants all - have uncovered information and brought forward the truth about things at Saint Michael Church, including the off-the-books accounts. One wonders why the diocese has been so far out front claiming that there was no fraud or theft committed by Father Moynihan with respect to the unaccounted for \$1 million. Any lay person found under such circumstances would be immediately fired, investigated by public authorities and arrested, if necessary. Not so with the Diocese of Bridgeport and the Father Moynihan case.

The maze of conflicts-of-interest in the diocesan-parish governance model is mind-boggling. The Catholic pastor is the sole, authorized executive office manager of a parish. As a Catholic priest, the pastor promises obedience in perpetuity to the bishop on his ordination day. The bishop needs the pastors to raise money for him. The good character of most pastors aside, satisfying one's civil law fiduciary duty to the parish Religious Corporation under this framework requires an ongoing miracle. This is the environment in which Father Moynihan operated for so many years (like Father Michael Jude Fay, Monsignor Charlie Stubbs and all the others). The diocese's new six-step program for financial transparency and accountability simply does not address these fundamental conflicts.

In reality, the challenges facing our parishes, dioceses and our U.S. Catholic Church go well beyond \$1 million and boyfriends.

**Tom Gallagher**  
Greenwich

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR-GREENWICH CITIZEN March 4, 2008**

Monsignor Frank Wissel, Pastor of St. Mary Church in Greenwich, has written letters to local papers recently about Church issues in the news. One supported his "brother priest" in Greenwich, Reverend Michael Moynihan. Monsignor indicated that too many letter writers had offered opinions without knowing all of the facts regarding the former pastor of St. Michael Church. Last week in the Citizen he "shared some thoughts and facts" regarding changes in financial administration within the Diocese of Bridgeport. Msgr. Wissel pointed to the changes as an example of accountable, mature and positive behavior.

As a faithful Catholic still regularly sitting in a pew as a Church member in the Diocese of Bridgeport, I write to offer some contrasting facts, thoughts and questions to readers for consideration about these same issues. The Diocese of Bridgeport has dealt in recent years with major issues of sexual abuse of youth by clergy, financial mismanagement of Church funds in more than one parish amounting to lost millions, and the public spectacle of pastors not living up to the expectations lay people have of their priests. In the face of this what are lay people who are Church members to do? Msgr. Wissel asks us to show compassion, be patient and wait for more facts to be revealed by our Bishop, practice upward financial accountability through the Diocesan chain of command and affirm whatever Church authority does.

About the practice of compassion: Where is the compassionate response to victims and survivors of sexual abuse today? Where is the regular parish and Diocesan response to welcome those who were harmed years ago, to let them share their voice, and receive a genuine, loving, and respectful acceptance of responsibility by the Church community? Why are the people in the pews prevented from listening to the spoken words of survivors and their families? (Those who doubt the reality of the stories of clerical sexual abuse can access the archives of [bishopaccountability.org](http://bishopaccountability.org) for historical documents and records.) Where is compassion and attention provided for 'spiritual brothers' like diocesan priest Father Michael Madden formerly of Darien or Father Thomas Doyle, O.P. who warned the US Bishops in 1985 of potential damage from the issue of the sexual abuse by clergy? What does Monsignor Wissel feel for Father Michael Jude Fay, another 'brother priest' in the Diocese of Bridgeport?

About patience in the pews to receive facts: I am not as optimistic with regard to the release of information and facts from Diocesan sources as Msgr. Wissel is. For instance as I became aware during the past five years of the extent of the sexual abuse scandal, I kept wondering: Why and how the men in leadership in each Diocese around the world could have permitted the continuing sexual victimization of Catholic youth by a small number of 'brother priests'? In the Diocese of Bridgeport where over \$40,000,000 has been spent in secret settlements to those alleging abuse, people are still unable to gain the facts and knowledge that Msgr. Wissel declares necessary for the expression of opinions. Past and current Bishops are preventing the release of documents and statements from the clergymen who were in charge during the historic periods of abuse.

Twice in the past ten years Connecticut courts have decided that the sealed records in abuse cases brought against the Diocese of Bridgeport should now be opened in order to serve the public interest. But the Diocese of Bridgeport each time appealed those decisions to the Connecticut Supreme Court. What is the reason for this? I have written to the Bishop suggesting that ultimate healing will be served by the release of these records. The Bishop has not responded to that letter and the Diocese continues to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of the funds provided by the people in the pews to keep the records sealed. Why is this? Is this a financial question on which the Church chain of command will provide full accountability?

The blueprint for standardization and centralization of parish finances has been available throughout the term of Bishop Lori's service to the Diocese. Recent events cried out for much better money collection, reporting and protection practices to be put in place rapidly. They are nearly complete but there has been no parallel process in making open, accountable and transparent the decision making process (and the role of all Church members) around budget formation relative to statements of Vision and Mission in each parish. If parish funds were spent by a priest 'living large', where are the open, accountable, and transparent instructions by the Bishop as to meaning of 'simple life' for his priests in Fairfield County? The Diocese of Bridgeport owns one billion dollars of land and buildings. When school and or Church closings appear on the Bridgeport radar screen as they increasingly have in neighboring Dioceses, what place will the 'people in the pews' who contributed the funds during the past 150 years have in the process of restructuring?

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