

# Our Voice

An E-Newsletter for Those Interested and Involved in The Voice of The Faithful • Connecticut  
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## CARDINAL GEORGE "UNFIT TO LEAD": VOTF CALLS FOR RESIGNATION

(From VOTF National Web Site)

The recently revealed deposition by Cardinal Francis George is a clear indictment of his pastoring skills and his inability to lead the people of Chicago. His repeated failures in both the Bennett and McCormack cases indicate a trend to disregard evidence from outside clerical circles and continue to follow the precedents of deceit, cover ups and secrecy (imbedded in the clerical culture) in lieu of protecting children from irreparable harm.

- Voice of the Faithful, reviewing the concrete revelations in the deposition, has no choice but to ask the cardinal to step down. We call for his resignation.

- We also call for a criminal investigation of the actions within the Archdiocese revealed in this deposition. (325 IL. Comp. Stat. 5/4 (West, WESTLAW through 2003 Reg. Ses.)

- We ask, "Where is the criminal justice system in light of demonstrated criminal failings repeated across the country, diocese after diocese? When will Catholic citizens demand morality and justice in our own Church?"

- We have seen bishops and other diocesan officials who aided cover-ups and enabled abusers rewarded with greater responsibilities and titles rather than being held accountable for their misdeeds. Does this system of rewards for failure encourage additional cover-ups?

- Insincere apologies and large financial settlements are "street theater" whether the apologies come from Cardinal George, his brother bishops or the Pope himself. If no consequences accrue to those engaging in committing, perpetuating, or hiding crimes from Catholic congregations, the behavior continues.

- We believe that as Catholics we must exercise our baptismal rights and responsibilities, which include calling for our bishops to be accountable to the people they serve.

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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.*

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

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#### How to become involved:

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**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)

## Cardinal George Asked to Resign

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With evidence of this latest transgression, and reports of the settlements made in Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, and many other dioceses, we have no trust in promises made by the hierarchy who created this breach of confidence, (We also note that Cardinal George was one of the authors of the bishops' Charter to Protect Young Children which his deposition indicates he then violated.)

Words of regret and apology, and promises of "unequivocal condemnation" mean little if they are not supported by action.

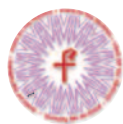
## VOTF NATIONAL FOR REVIEW OF MANDATED CELIBACY

In a letter to Cardinal O'Malley, VOTF urged the U.S. bishops to request a "serious ecclesial review of mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests." Cardinal O'Malley chairs the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations of the USCCB. The letter calls on the committee to consider the review in light of a 60% drop in vocations to the priesthood during the past 40 years.

For many young men, the letter notes, "the requirement of celibacy is a major obstacle preventing them from responding to a call from the priesthood." The solutions currently pursued in response to the priesthood are not sufficient. "Recruiting non-native priests from poor countries, substituting communion services for Mass, lowering standards for admission to seminaries", and an increase in parish closings and the use of one priest to serve as pastor for multiple parishes fail to address the root of the problem.

VOTF hopes to open a dialogue among bishops, priests, and laity that considers both the charism of celibacy when it is freely embraced -- as well as the negative effects of imposing the discipline as a requirement of priestly ministry.

(Copy edited for space reasons.)



## IS THERE REALLY A GOD?

By Joey Piscitelli, Sexual Abuse Survivor

There have been many times in my life that I doubted the existence of "God," most notably when I was being repeatedly molested by the deranged Vice-Principal of Salesian High School, Fr. Steve Whelan. That doubt was magnified when I realized that the Salesian Order was riddled with serial molesters who supported and covered for each other at my school, committing countless unconscionable deviate acts against children, with no regard to whether there was a God "watching" them, or not.

It was inconceivable to me as a child how a Salesian Priest could commit vile perverted acts against me one moment, and then say Holy Mass and give out Communion moments later. This disturbing fact led me to believe that there could not possibly be a "God," who would permit this sick behavior and not intervene. It also occurred to me that the sociopathic lives of the many Salesian Priests who committed these acts were completely acceptable to them, and surely the Divine Creator would not tolerate such rampant deviant behavior, at the cost of the destruction of so many innocent children.

That said, I left Salesian High School years ago, convinced that no "God" would allow these atrocities, and I was sure I was alone with no spirituality in my life forever. It was years later, in the year 2003, that the State of California lifted the statute of limitations to file claims against the organizations who were responsible for the molestation and rapes of children, and I filed a suit against the negligent Salesian Order, and the abhorrent molester, Fr. Whelan.

It was then that the true Salesian colors surfaced. Several other victims I knew filed suit against the mammoth Salesian nest of pedophiles, but the herd of Salesian molesters, rapists and child violators hired an endless barrage of attorneys to trample their victims.

In many cases where Salesian serial molesters from my school, like Fr. Richard Presenti, were sued, the Salesian lawyers were able to get the cases dismissed from court because of quirks or technicalities and the victims were shattered.

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## OTHER VOICES AROUND THE COUNTRY

By Joanne Blair

**VOTF Santa Barbara CA** began its season with the series of lectures, each presented by a different person, on the topic "Word and Life". The meetings are held from 10 am to 12 noon each Thursday from September 18 through November 13.

Both the **Santa Barbara and the Northern California VOTF** affiliates posted notices of the 2nd Annual Northern California Lay Convocation entitled "Bring Voice to Faith" and held at the University of San Francisco on September 6.

Also on September 6, **Greater Bridgeport CT VOTF** held its first meeting of the season at the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk, CT. Joseph O'Callaghan, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at Fordham, spoke on "The Eucharist in the History of the Church". (O'Callaghan has also taught Church History at the Holy Ghost Fathers Seminary in Norwalk, CT, and at St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie, NY.)

**VOTF Long Island** sponsored their 5TH Faith Convention on September 13 at the Huntington Hilton in Melville, New York. This year's topic was "A Forum on the Emergence of the Laity in the 21st Century" and featured Leonard Swindler and Paul Lakeland as speakers. Panel representatives included members of VOTF, FutureChurch, CTA, Pax Christi, SNAP and Common Ground.

A very timely presentation of "Catholics as Citizens and Disciples" was presented by the **Winchester (MA) Area VOTF** on September 21 at St. Eulalia's Church in Winchester. Father Bryan Hehir of the Kennedy School of Government addressed the question "What understanding of being disciples can best help people to be contributors to American society at this time in our history?"

On September 26 **Twin Cities VOTF** (Minneapolis/St. Paul) sponsored an address by Judge Michael Merz of the National Review Board, at the Basilica of St. Mary, Minneapolis. Judge Merz discussed topics offered by local affiliate members, including the progress to date of the National Review Board, its future goals, and realistic outcomes from the Pope's visit to the US.

## Is there a God? continued from page 2

Unlike many other Catholic Priest Orders or Dioceses, who realized that the horrific acts their clergy committed against children were disgraceful and detestable, the Salesians had absolutely no remorse. Where other Catholic entities shamefully admitted their crimes, and settled their claims, and even apologized, the Salesians attacked their victims with a relentless vengeance and hatred that would surely make a true "God" faint.

As my trial was approaching in 2005, the Salesians enlisted several law firms to attack not only me, but my family and friends as well. The Salesian lawyers waged war and vowed to spend anything to destroy me, with no reservations. The pedophile friendly Cardinal William Levada, well known for his closeness to the many Salesian serial molesters in his backyard in San Francisco, contributed immensely to the Salesian campaign of bitter retaliation and hateful vengeance.

On the starting day of my court jury trial in July of 2006, the vast Salesian lawyer teams literally laughed in my face outside the judge's chambers, promising their victory and mockingly stating that they would not even settle for 1 thin dime, which one of the lawyers held up. Fr. David Purdy, the Salesian top man on the West Coast, or "Provincial" as he is referred to, was gloating. Fr. Purdy was Principal at my Salesian school years earlier when I was molested, and was best friend of Vice Principal Fr. Whelan, who had molested me. Fr. Purdy had tried to talk me into suicide when I was a student at Salesian school, and I had testified against him in court. His reaction was to laugh at me in mockery as he was sure of victory in the court, which his teams of lawyers had promised.

Fr. Purdy's behavior, along with the behavior of his lawyers and the Salesian Society, reaffirmed my conviction that there was no possible way that any "God" could possibly exist, as the hatred and vindictive behavior of the Salesian Priests was entirely inconceivable. After 2 weeks of jury trial in 2006 (a psychological bloodbath for my family and me) the jury announced that I had won. The Salesian reaction in court as the verdict was read was an audible spewing of four letter words, shocking several of the witnesses, but not me. continued on page 4

## Is there really a God?

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I have known for many years about the behavior and capabilities of the Salesians of California, and nothing could surprise me about them now.

Almost immediately after their defeat in Contra Costa Supreme Court, the Salesians filed an appeal. Rather than pay the jury verdict award, the Salesians continued to badmouth me and stated publicly that the jury was unfair. They lost an appeal to the high Appellate Court, again promising victory. They proceeded then to hire more attorneys and vowed to spend untold amounts to defeat me at any cost. After a year went by, in 2007, they asked for a one year extension.

Early in 2008, the Salesians were still fighting several other court battles in Southern California, where Salesian serial molesters were being sued for raping other child victims. Not surprisingly, the Salesians spent millions of dollars in Southern California Courts, calling their victims liars and waging war against them with no regard.

Ironically, as one Salesian victim in Southern California stated, "The Salesians hate and fight like there ain't no God." Amen, brother.

A few months later, however, as the Salesian court case against the egregious Salesian pedophile serial rapist Fr. Jim Miani reached the Southern California court steps, the Salesians settled for 21 million dollars; the evidence against the Salesian molester priests was so staggering, even their lawyers buckled.

Meanwhile, back here in Northern California, the army of Salesian lawyers concentrated on destroying me in the Appellate Court and resumed spending truckloads of cash on their strategies and filings. The Salesian kingpins in San Francisco again promised certain victory, as they proclaimed Fr. Whelan to be a martyr and a saint.

As I protested in many events at Catholic Churches in San Francisco in the last 6 years, the most memorable statement I have ever heard came from a Salesian priest at St. Peter and Paul's in San Francisco. I was handing out flyers about the World Record amount of

child abusers at Salesians in the Bay Area, and a Salesian priest came out of the Church, and grabbed a flyer from my hand and tore it up and threw it at me while he said loudly, "You will lose your case in the Appeals Court because God is on our side."

## And what God would that be?

I appeared two months ago in Appellate Court to watch the court proceedings in my case. As expected, the Salesians brought a virtual army of attorneys that filled the benches in the court. The Salesian head attorney addressed the three appellate judges with audacity and assurance and dominated the floor for almost the entire proceeding. I imagine she was absolutely sure of her victory, as the Salesian Society had promised churchgoers and the public that the jury may have been unfair in the jury case in 2006, but the Appellate Court would surely grant them the whopping victory they deserved and demanded.

Yesterday, the judges posted their decision. I won the appeal brought by the Salesians, and the jury trial decision was upheld. Although the Salesians never apologized to me and never will, I can't help but feel....how do they feel about their Creator?

And now, after waiting 5 years since my court case was filed in 2003, and after hearing the Appellate decision that I won, my question at this point is: "Is there really a God?"



# A TRIBUTE TO ANN CASEY GRIFFITH: "BEHOLD, A VALIANT WOMAN!"

by Joanne Moran

If ever the word "valiant" applies, it does so in any description of Ann Casey Griffith. After a death defying, life defining five year battle with kidney cancer, Ann succumbed on August 5, 2008.

Of the many communities she worked for and energized, Voice of the Faithful was especially close to her heart. It was close to her heart because it addressed injustice and called those in power to accountability. Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) was close to her heart because it demanded protection, healing and recompense for abused children, the most vulnerable and innocent among us.

VOTF was close to her heart because it insisted on the definition of the Church as the People of God empowered by the Spirit, not by the hierarchy. In the words of the reading from the prophet Micah that Ann, herself, chose for her funeral mass, she felt that VOTF did indeed strive to "act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God." Ann had the heart of a lioness. Ann had the heart of a mother.

From Voice of the Faithful's earliest days, Ann Griffith put her considerable energy and passion into its efforts, both locally and nationally. She was among the earliest to come to organizing meetings at St. Timothy's in West Hartford, listening, questioning, speaking, joining working groups. Eventually, she co-facilitated the Greater West Hartford VOTF Affiliate.

In her "anything for the cause" attitude, she even bought a computer and struggled mightily to master its mysteries. She attended the first National Conference at the Hynes Center in Boston and regional conferences at Fordham and again in Worcester. During much of this time she was already fighting her war against cancer, but in facing that battle she also decided to live and fight for life and justice using the community and structures of VOTF. To the very end, Ann, no longer able to come to programs and meetings, did what she could by working on mailings and membership lists from her hospital bed at home.

Ann Griffith, like Paul Lakeland, believed that her baptism empowered her with rights and that those rights came with responsibilities. In large ways and in small ways she undertook them with spirit.

Lakeland says in *Catholicism at the Crossroads* the principal responsibility of the Church is its mission to the world. And the world is principally the responsibility of the laity by virtue of their baptism in which "they are not subject to ecclesiastical oversight" and are, in fact, the "vanguard of that mission." Ann Griffith put flesh around those words when on two separate occasions she confronted, face to face, an auxiliary bishop and the Archbishop of Hartford on behalf of those sexually abused by priests. It was, she told both men, her dying wish that a special mass of penance, reconciliation and healing be celebrated in the name of the Archdiocese for all those injured in any way by the abuse and cover-up. Ann died with that desire unfulfilled. Perhaps Voice of the Faithful's best tribute to her will be to continue to work for her last hope and her worthy quest.

Behold Ann Griffith, a valiant woman! I believe she goes forth in peace continuing to love and serve our God and in so doing, blesses us all with her unflinching spirit.

## 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*

# THE POPE VISITS: A REFLECTION ON WAITING

BY THOMAS DOYLE

This past Monday (August 18, 2008) I testified at a trial. The diocese had ample notice that the abuser-priest was a danger to minors. The former bishop of the diocese being sued has received this priest from another diocese and that diocese in turn had received him from his home diocese. In the first diocese the bishop kicked him out after he had sexually assaulted boys in three of the four parishes to which he had been assigned. He found a new bishop who took him in.

In that diocese he sexually assaulted boys in each of the four parishes to which he had been assigned. That bishop gave him his walking papers and he ended up in the last diocese. There he sexually assaulted boys in the first two parishes to which he was assigned and sent to a third. That's where he assaulted the plaintiff in the case. The bishop knew all of this but, to use his own words, he was willing "to take the risk." Sounds like a slam-dunk doesn't it? It gets better. This is the third trial for this diocese. They have already lost in two.

There are about 20 more projected for victims of the same priest. The trials are a nightmare for the victims and their families. They are expensive as well. The lawyers who represent the diocese get paid one way or another. The lawyers for the victims are on contingency. The church lawyers' fees come from the donations of the people. If the jury gives a big award, some people get bent out of shape and complain about how much the payments to the victims cost the diocese. They really ought to complain about the payments to the lawyers which are totally unnecessary.

I learned that the little guy in the black outfit sitting at the corner of the defense table was the bishop. I also learned that neither he nor any of his predecessors had ever reached out to any of the victims. Throughout the day as I sat on the stand and answered questions I looked at the victim on my left and the bishop on my right. What was wrong with that picture? Simple! The bishop was in the wrong place. He should have been sitting next to the victim offering support, sympathy, kindness and hope. Instead he was on the other side, probably worrying that the testimony was not making his diocese look too good.

At one point the diocesan lawyer made a big deal about the fees that I am supposed to receive as an expert witness. He left out the part that an expert has to take fees or he isn't an expert. He didn't seem too interested when I responded to a question from the plaintiff attorney in which I shared that I have given away most of the fees I have ever received. Do lawyers who represent the Church work for nothing? Hardly!

So, what does all of this have to do with the pope? Plenty! Benedict XVI made a big splash in the U.S. and in Australia with all of his remarks about clergy sexual abuse and with the personal encounters he had with a small group of victims in each country. A lot of people announced that the Pope, the Vatican and the hierarchy have finally "gotten it."

After all, Pope John Paul II not only did nothing, but in the few statements he made he tried to shift the blame to anyone and anything from where it ought to be.

Not so with Benedict. First he fired the notorious Marcel Maciel Degollado, the founder of the cult-like outfit called The Legion of Christ. Then he came to the US and said he was ashamed at the way things had gone. He also said similar things in Australia. He may feel personally ashamed and scandalized but that doesn't mean a thing unless he does something and thus far has done nothing. That's where this trial comes in. In spite of the pope's appearance of compassion it has not rubbed off on the bishops. The trial I was at should have been stopped before it started. The bishop should have picked up on the Pope's words and shown concern for the victims instead of himself and his bureaucracy and his diocese's money.

The pope should have taken action but he didn't. The major fallacy with the hierarchy and the pope is that they think their words always make things happen. They think that a statement or a gesture or even a liturgy such as a healing Mass, are all that they have to do. Even thinking in that way is a gross insult to those hurt by the church. People are sick to death of the highly nuanced statements that keep coming out of the public relations departments of the Church because they are not only empty. They are dishonest and an insult to the intelligence and integrity of decent and honest men and women.

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The pope could have:

1. Issued an order to all bishops to stop all legal actions and start treating the victims with care and compassion instead of treating them like the enemy.
2. Ordered the bishops to stop building cathedrals and monuments to themselves and use the funds for programs to help victims and their families.
3. Invited a few hundred victims to the Vatican at his expense to meet with him and the other Vatican big shots so as to find out first hand just how horrendous this whole nightmare has been.
4. Publicly fired some of the more notorious cardinals starting with Cardinals George, Egan, Mahony, Pell and Levada. Once the top guys are gone, then start on the next level, namely the bishops.
5. Stopped persecuting theologians and scholars who are trying to figure out some of the blatant contradictions on Church teaching and practice, starting with celibacy and the whole bizarre theology of human sexuality.
6. Sent sizable personal donations to SNAP, NAPSAC and ROAD TO RECOVERY.

I think we all know that all of the above have no chance of happening. Perhaps the most realistic thing we can hope for is an awakening by isolated bishops here and there. We can also continue to hope that lay Catholics, who persist in looking at the hierarchical system through rose-colored glasses, will start to grow up, get past their denial and see reality for what it is. The recent popes and hierarchy have enabled the most horrendous spiritual and emotional destruction of vulnerable people in a thousand years. Thus far they are doing precious little to make it right. Those who continue to bow and scrape at the medieval ecclesiastical court are not faithful Catholics but enablers of evil. The heresy here is that the pope and the bishops seem to have no real clue that the plunder of the bodies and souls of the vulnerable boys, girls, men and women is evil that is perpetrated by clerics and religious men and women whose lives were supposed to combat evil rather than cause it.

## **AROUND THE CHURCH - NEWS IN BRIEF**

By Joanne Blair

**In 1994 Norbert Maday was convicted of sexual assault of a minor and sentenced to 20 years in jail.** However, he had a friend in Cardinal George who wrote to Maday saying 6 years in prison was "enough." Gerald Forseth, the now retired detective who had investigated the case, was "appalled" when he read (in a recent Chicago Sun-Times) of the efforts by George and other diocesan officials to get Maday released.

He was, however, not surprised. When he originally came to Chicago to investigate he noted that the archdiocese "stonewalled us at every turn...they kept moving him from church to church." During the course of the investigation, Forseth discovered 8 other Maday victims. Fortunately for potential further victims, the State feels differently than Cardinal George. Maday is being held at a state-run facility in Winnebago as officials move to commit him indefinitely as a "sexually violent person".

**No information given on sexual abuse before 1993. Margaret Mensen, former administrator of a civilian review board investigating priestly misconduct, said that neither Bishop Wilton Gregory nor diocesan officials handed over information on sexual abuse of minors by Father Raymond Kownacki....** As a matter of fact, the Review Board did not have access to any documents kept on allegations of sexual abuse before 1993!

Despite persistent allegations of abuse Kownacki was shuffled from parish to parish. In the 1970's he was accused of raping a girl who later became pregnant and trying to squeeze her uterus to force the baby out. For this he was sent for alcohol treatment, later moved to a parish in Salem, Michigan and from there to various other parishes, none of which was informed of past allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct on his part. His trial is scheduled for later in the month.

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**And the beat goes on.** John A. Aretakis, an attorney who represents sexual abuse victims, noted "a lot of time I'm criticized because the claims are 25-30 years old. Well, this claim is not. The abuse happened in 2007." A family in Montgomery County, New York, claimed that the Rev. John W. Broderick had inappropriate sexual contact with their children ranging in age from 5 to 11, during a few months in 2007. A Montgomery County grand jury recently indicted Broderick on charges of abusing three children younger than 11.

Broderick was ordained in 1989 but has not ministered in his Syracuse Diocese since 2004. He has since been involved with religious groups not affiliated with the Vatican and has been on unpaid leave until earlier this year when he was suspended.

## HEY! WAIT A MINUTE! WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS?

By Monsignor Harry J. Byrne, JCD

Sit up straight in your chair and look at this! A full-page ad in "America" magazine, NCR and elsewhere! Color photo of Pope Benedict XVI; in bold type "Come follow me." And then, "We'd like you to join us in making Pope Benedict's vision of building a society of life and love a reality." No Jesus! Not a mention! Jesus said, "Come follow me," not Benedict! Jesus we follow; His vision we seek! **WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS?**

In June 6, 2008 "Commonweal", a Letter to the Editor from Bishop Eldon Curtis of Omaha states "It is the primary duty of a bishop to keep his diocese in union with the universal church under the leadership of the successor of St. Peter." Primary duty? What happened to Jesus?

Human organizations have a centralizing impulse. What is centralized? Control; authority; power! Different popes have different visions. John XXIII brought the world's bishops together in Vatican II. Collegial efforts produced a church-shaking phenomenon. The Church was seen as "the people of God".

And that "people" had a new voice - the vernacular in liturgy and greater roles. Paul VI sought to continue a collegiate modus operandi in his establishment of the Synods of Bishops.

John Paul II had a different vision. The Exhortations after the various Synods incorporated the vision of John Paul, not a collegial vision as in Vatican II and as intended by Paul VI. John Paul's charismatic personality accomplished much but did not put into play the visions of the Synods. He diminished the role of the laity in liturgy. He insisted, to the dismay of the Japanese bishops, that liturgical texts be translated in Rome, not in Japan. He neutered the national conferences of bishops; significant action decisions had to be unanimous; otherwise they went to Rome. Benedict XVI brought back the Latin Mass. These are a few examples of policy changes by John Paul and Benedict achieved not by collegiate action and vision, but by popes with their own singular vision.

Of course the Holy Father has an important place in our faith vision -- in the lives of our universal Church, our national and ethnic churches and our personal lives. But the centralizing impulse and its exaggerations are at work. This may explain the "Come follow me" ad and the primary duty" of Bishop Curtis.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS?

(more of Msgr. Byrne at [harryjbyrne.blogspot.com](http://harryjbyrne.blogspot.com))

