

**What We, and the New Archbishop of Boston,
Face in Our Church in light of the
Attorney General's Report**

STATEMENT OF
Jim Post, President
Voice of the Faithful
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The release, today, of the Massachusetts Attorney General's report on "*The Sexual Abuse of Children in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston*" is another landmark in our understanding of how the Catholic Church, and its leaders, betrayed the most innocent and vulnerable of our citizens through the misguided belief that secrecy would protect an institution that was compromised at its moral core.

The report provides a chilling picture of how grown men, entrusted with the highest moral and secular responsibility, betrayed the children they vowed to protect and betrayed the Church they vowed to serve. The dreadful lack of a moral compass revealed in their deeds - and in their own words that acknowledge those deeds - leaves decent, Church-going Catholics sickened. People of every faith - or no faith - cannot fail to be outraged by the revelations in this report.

It is important that we, the members of VOTF - as ordinary citizens of this Commonwealth and this great nation - thank the members of the Grand Jury, the Attorney General, and the Attorney General's staff for their 16-month investigation. Voice of the Faithful deeply appreciates the commitment of our fellow citizens to telling the truth - and to shedding sunlight on these long-suppressed facts.

Today, VOTF is calling on all Catholics to join in prayerful commitment to clean up the Catholic Church by undertaking a **fundamental reexamination of the human decision processes** that led to this catastrophe. Our calls include the following:

First, every member of the Catholic laity - women and men of all ages and ethnic backgrounds - should make a personal statement to the new archbishop designate of Boston, Sean O'Malley. Send your letters to the Chancery at 2121 Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton; send your faxes, send your e-mails with your opinions and suggestions on this matter. We laypersons should be silent no longer. If you send a copy to Voice of the Faithful by email or letter, I promise that we will publicize the number of communications that have been sent to Church officials. A massive public communications campaign will demonstrate broad public commitment to reform. Let your voice be heard.

As part of being heard, lay Catholics should engage in what Attorney General Reilly today called "vigilant oversight from the public to assure that the Archdiocese does indeed act to protect children." Paraphrasing the

Report itself, the public must remain vigilant until the Archdiocese demonstrates its understanding that it is criminal to sexually abuse a child ... until it ends the culture of secrecy that has protected the institution at the expense of children ... until it adopts and implements comprehensive preventive measures ... until it appropriately responds to all allegations of child sexual abuse ... and until it becomes accountable at every level of the institution for ensuring the protection of children.

Third, VOTF will join other organizations and individuals in a call for structural and cultural reforms in the Catholic Church that transform the culture of secrecy into a culture of honesty. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, and the Attorney General's Report underscores how badly this disinfectant is needed. The knowledge, common sense, moral vision, and wisdom that reside with lay parents, doctors, psychologists, and everyday parishioners is also a great treasure of our Church. Tapping into the laity's collective wisdom at the parish and diocesan levels - and beyond - is another step on the road to structural and cultural reform.

Fourth, VOTF calls on the Vatican - on Pope John Paul II personally - to heed this Report, and to reprimand publicly Church officials who perpetrated these shameful acts on innocent children. There can be no reasonable doubt that Cardinal Law and Bishops Daily, Banks, Hughes, McCormack, and Murphy failed in their ministry to the people and families of the Archdiocese of Boston. These bishops - and all other Church officials throughout the country who engaged in these shameful behaviors - must be disciplined by the Vatican.

Fifth, it is morally unacceptable that the protectors of predators continue to hold positions of administrative leadership in our Church. These men are so deeply compromised that they are ineffective as pastoral leaders. They should conduct a thorough examination of conscience, and in the interest of moral clarity and true contrition, they should decide on their own to tender their resignations from all diocesan and episcopal positions. Once tendered, the Vatican should accept their resignations immediately.

Sixth, VOTF calls on the Archdiocese of Boston to publicly acknowledge its moral culpability as going far beyond "errors" or "mistakes of judgment."

Finally, we must recognize that the one man on whom the greatest burden now falls is Archbishop-designate Sean O'Malley, who will be installed next week. We urge Bishop O'Malley to recognize that to cleanse this troubled Archdiocese, he cannot do this job alone, but rather, he must actively draw every person of good will in to the cleansing effort. We recommend that he begin by asking for the help and involvement of all Catholics - every priest, every member of religious community, every laywoman and layman. And we at Voice of the Faithful offer to participate in creating a 4-sided table of laity, survivors, priests, and hierarchy committed to dialogue, truth, and honest reform.