

Voice of the Faithful
In The Diocese of Bridgeport
Annual Report
July 2009 To July 2010

From: Jamie Dance, Co-Chairman

Our year began with an emergency board meeting on July 15, called to address VOTF National's call for donations in light of its dire financial straits. It was decided that we would answer with a donation totaling \$5,000, sent in two increments, and accompanied by a letter detailing what we perceived to be the reasons for the precarious financial situation and suggested solutions. Our own financial health, greatly enhanced by the Wiggins Family Foundation, continues to improve with prudent fiscal oversight.

VOTF-Bridgeport continued to hold General meetings at the Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk. We have continued to offer Board members the opportunity to dine with our speakers prior to the meetings at their own expense.

Monthly Board meetings were held in members' homes.

2009-2010 Programs

Speakers:

Since September 2009, our speakers have included:

Marian Ronan spoke on “In the Shadow of the Cross: From Vatican II to the Global Church”.

Madeleine Boucher spoke on “Mary Magdalene, Preeminent Disciple and First Apostle”.

Sr. Theresa Kane spoke on “Women and Women Religious: Our Vision of Church and Society in the 21st Century”.

James Kelly spoke on “Radical But Not Utopian: How The Peace and Pro-Life Movements Need Each Other”.

Mark Massa spoke on “The Church in the 21st Century: Evangelical and Catholic”.

Jamie Manson spoke on “The Grace of Living on the Margins: Being Bread to One Another in a Church in Famine”.

Terry McKiernan of Bishop Accountability participated in a panel discussion on the recently released Rosado files.

Annual Conference, March 27, at Fairfield University

“The Discipleship of Equals”

Our Annual Conference, presented by Fairfield University Center for Catholic Studies and VOTF Bridgeport, featured keynote speaker, Dr. Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza of Harvard Divinity School and author of the book that inspired this conference. Professor Paul Lakeland of Fairfield responded to her address, and a discussion moderated by Professor Nancy Dallavalle followed.

Once again, the afternoon session featured two panels, “The Discipleship of Equals: A Changing Laity’s Perspective” and “The Discipleship of Equals: Next Gen Speaks”.

The first panel was made up of 30-40 year-olds who are active in parish life, and the second of students from Yale College and Divinity School and Fairfield University.

Both panels spoke on the subject from their own perspectives and then the audience was invited to join the discussion with comments and questions. It proved to be an enlightening and enjoyable experience for all.

A Prayer Service celebrating a discipleship of equals led by VOTF Board Members concluded the conference.

Second Annual VOTF-Bridgeport Volunteer Award

This award, The St. Anselm of Canterbury Award, honors service to our organization. It was presented to Tony Wiggins at our June General Meeting because of his absence from the March conference.

2010 Voice of Compassion Awards:

Gifts amounting to \$12,400 were distributed to nine non-profit organizations at the conference. Among those receiving donations were the Black Rock Food Pantry, the Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Daughters of Charity, Dorothy Day Hospitality House, Person-to-Person, Christian Community Action in Norwalk, The Center for Sexual Assault Crisis Counseling and Education, and SNAP of Connecticut.

The Year in Review

This has been a very busy year for VOTF Bridgeport. The decision by the United States Supreme Court to release the Rosado Documents by December 1, 2009, was the impetus for both a General Meeting panel in the spring and a full-blown conference to be held November 13, 2010. A lot of work has gone into reading and organizing thousands of pages of testimony. VOTF is hopeful that our efforts will educate the people of the Diocese of Bridgeport and lead to greater awareness of the issues at hand in the Church.

Internally, VOTF Bridgeport continues to flourish because of the energy and enthusiasm of its members. In November 2009, the Women's Group, led by Joanne Bray, organized and held an event at St. Paul's on the Green in Norwalk that dealt with women's roles in the Church, and the two ongoing investigations of American Women Religious. Over 40 women attended this enlightening and enjoyable event.

The Study Group on Church Governance, led by Jamie Dance and Joe O'Callaghan, spent the year studying and discussing the two-volume set of Hans Kung's Memoirs. These books provided a wonderful insight into the Church, pre- and post- Vatican II.

The Future:

The future of VOTF Bridgeport remains bright because of the dedication and incredible abilities of its members. The enthusiasm and energy that surfaces when events present themselves continues to delight me. I also am happy to report that attendance at our General meetings continues to grow. This is reflective, I believe, of the continued dissonance between the hierarchy and the laity that has played itself out on the front pages of newspapers around the world. Catholics today find themselves in a troubling time, when Church authority is questioned and moral leadership is lacking. Perhaps it is now, more than ever, that the VOTF motto, "Keep the Faith, Change the Church", can be an empowering call to a true discipleship of equals.