

# Our Voice

An E-Newsletter for Those Interested and Involved in The Voice of The Faithful • Connecticut  
February 2007 Issue Number 16

## BOSTON FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY: A MODEL FOR OTHER DIOCESES

By Rick Lenz

How are other dioceses addressing the issue of financial transparency and accountability in the wake of the clergy sexual abuse scandal? More than 80 people learned the answer to this question for at least one diocese particularly hard hit by the scandal -- the Archdiocese of Boston. The discussion took place at the November meeting of the Farmington Valley VOTF.

The featured speaker was Jack McCarthy, a retired partner at the accounting firm of PriceWaterhouse Coopers and now a principal at the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University. At Cardinal Sean O'Malley's request, McCarthy chaired a volunteer committee that oversaw the process of preparing a complete and thorough presentation to the public of the Archdiocese of Boston's finances. The presentation, known as the Financial Transparency Report, has been widely acclaimed as the most extensive public financial disclosure ever released by any diocese in the United States.

McCarthy began his presentation by describing the negative climate that existed in the Archdiocese of Boston in 2005 as the result of the clergy sexual abuse crisis, several widely publicized parish closings and a number of other factors. In response, Cardinal O'Malley made a commitment in October of that year to provide consolidated financial statements for the Archdiocesan corporation as well as an accounting of the source and use of funds expended for the settlement of sexual abuse claims. He also pledged that each parish in the Archdiocese would provide its parishioners with an annual financial report beginning in late 2006. McCarthy then related how the effort to fulfill these pledges was structured and implemented, culminating in the release of the Financial Transparency Report to many different audiences, including the media. As he summed up the history and the impact of the Boston Archdiocese's extensive financial disclosure, McCarthy identified several key "lessons learned" through that process:

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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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#### **HELPFUL LINKS:**

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

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

**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)

## **BOSTON FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY**

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\* The Financial Transparency Report was a success only because the commitment to its preparation and publication came from the very "top" -- that is, from Cardinal O'Malley himself.

\* That commitment overcame all obstacles and contrary advice and ensured the quality, timeliness and credibility of the final report. The formation of a voluntary, independent team to spearhead the effort to produce the report was the most critical element of the project.

\* This "fresh eyes" approach bolstered credibility, provided the necessary resources to accomplish the task in a challengingly short time frame, and ensured the coordination with all archdiocesan councils and staff and kept the overall cost of the project within manageable bounds. The report did much more than was expected and provided something for all stakeholders in this issue, including survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

\* The attitude that produced the report was one of "what are the many questions that can and should be addressed as an integral part of the financial disclosure?" Although the report was voluminous, the key document was a relatively simple brochure providing an analysis of the most basic questions being asked by the average Catholic layperson. The focus of the group preparing the report was to make its contents intelligible to the "man on the street."

## **FRONTLINE PRESENTS "HAND OF GOD" TO VIEWERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

**By Joanne P. Blair**

"Hand of God" is a small gem of a film about a sexual abuse survivor, written and directed by his brother, a film editor "by trade and personality". It tells the tale of abuse which remained unspoken for 30 years and its effect on the entire family. Beautifully wrought, it relies on the story to tell itself through film shots and, occasionally, through home movies of the distant past.

Joseph Cultera, writer, director and producer, took a year of his life to produce the film and show it around the country at private showings, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and seventeen film festivals. Reviews called it "cerebral...forceful", "provocative and powerful", "poised and

impassioned" with one reviewer commenting that "Hand of God" is like a symphony that builds itself a leisurely first movement, quietly foreshadows coming tempest, then unleashes itself."

Recently, Frontline offered to feature it on their more than 340 PBS stations around the country. All but two affiliates showed it on January 16 and some, like New York's Channel 13, repeated it on the 19th. Of those that did not air the program, one had a scheduling conflict and the other, owned by the Archdiocese of Brownsville, declined to show "Hand of God" because the general manager, Monsignor Brisena, wanted to watch it before it was aired locally to see if it was "appropriate" for local viewers. The local press carried a strong protest by Call to Action.

Paul Cultera's abuse and his confrontations with the Church took place before the January 2002 revelation of widespread sexual abuse by the Boston Globe; thus his suffering and shame were increased by his sense of isolation. As it turned out, he was one of about 100 victims of Father Joseph Birmingham, several of whom were friends who had also kept silent. The film shows a picture of the seminary class which included Birmingham, Paul Shanley and 9 other perpetrators or enablers, including the current Bishop John McCormack, who falsely denied knowing what was going on with his long-time friend and classmate, Father Birmingham.

Some of the most powerful scenes in the film are those which feature direct contact with Church officials. At a 1983 Church picnic, Father Laurena comments about what a priest really is. He asks a group of parishioners (with the knowledge that he is being filmed) "It's my parish, isn't it? What do they want from me? I'm a worker. I'm a service man. If somebody needs life to be given them I give it. The man of God should not be accepted by the community... He should be feared. He should be revered. He should be listened to. I'm a man set apart; I'm somebody different." Another such occasion takes place at the chancery where the Cultera brothers are turned away by Bishop Lennon. He says to Joe who is attempting to explain his brother's plight, "This is private property... you're a sad little man."

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# CALENDAR

## **GREATER HARTFORD VOTF**

Will meet Thursday,  
March 8 at 7:30 pm  
At St Thomas the Apostle Church  
Farmington Avenue, West Hartford

## **GREATER BRIDGEPORT VOTF**

Presents **Sister Theresa Kane**  
in a Discussion on  
***The Church in a Time of Crisis***

Thursday, March 1, 7:30 pm  
First Congregational  
Church on the Green  
5 Park Street, Norwalk

## **CONNECTICUT SNAP**

Holds meetings in the  
**HARTFORD AREA**

On the 2nd Wednesday of the  
month, From 7 to 9 pm

## **BRIDGEPORT/NEW HAVEN**

Meetings Announced on a  
month-to-month basis  
Locations not published  
for privacy reasons  
(Info at [www.snapct.org](http://www.snapct.org))

## **WILL THE CHURCH EVER BE ACCOUNTABLE? LONG ISLAND VOTF PUTS ON THE PRESSURE**

By Joanne P. Blair

LIVOTF was one of the first groups of VOTF affiliates to tackle the issue of financial accountability in the church. Speaking to the members of Greater Bridgeport VOTF at their January meeting, Kevin Connors of LIVOTF told how the affiliates banded together in 2002 in their ongoing attempt to make the church accountable.

The first issue came up when Bishop Murphy, transferred to Long Island from Boston where he had been cited by the Grand Jury report for his poor job in dealing with the sexual abuse crisis, decided to evict a group of nuns from a building in which they had been living. He then proceeded to refurbish it at great cost, prompting LIVOTF to formulate specific steps in the process of getting accountability from their Church. Their attempt to get copies of diocesan financial reports failed when they discovered that no one could recall when these had last been published.

The following year they approached the diocese with an offer to support the 2003 Annual Appeal in return for the opportunity to work with the Finance Council to help develop openness and transparency in diocesan finances. They were refused. The next step was to hold a news conference in the Huntington Hilton Hotel. Surprisingly, all the media showed up, including the three major TV networks, Newsday, and talk radio, which interviewed VOTF members over the air even as the conference was taking place. They then sent letters to the membership and to all the pastors in the diocese setting forth their concerns. This time there was a result: the diocese released some financial statements, most of which were useless in determining the actual financial status of the diocese.

In 2004, citing the lack of response for financial openness by the diocese, LIVOTF raised the stakes and announced to the news media their decision to boycott the Annual Appeal and to encourage others to join them. The names of charities that were open and

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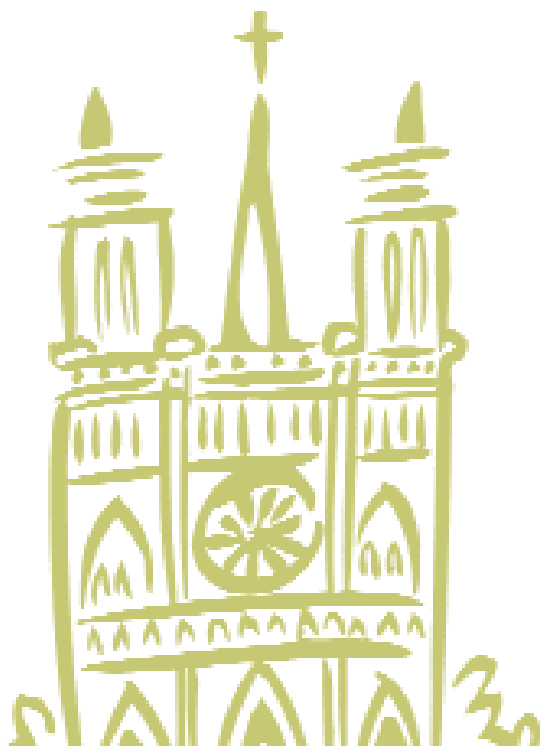
## FRONTLINE PRESENTS "HAND OF GOD"

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Paul's poignant statement about the long-term effects of his trauma asserted that "sexual abuse tosses you into a life of secrecy. There were parts of me that shut down when I was a 14-year-old. There's something wrong with me." The feeling that there was something wrong with him stayed for 30 years. The Globe's revelations about the scandal were an awakening that made him realize that he was not alone; he is pleased that the newspaper had the courage to break the story.

One of the most captivating parts of the film is the way it weaves into the pervasive sadness of the plot the beautiful tale of a loving, extended family whose Church was the center of their lives. From the beginning to the present day this sense of allegiance to family and Church remains, at least to Paul's parents and sister who still practice their faith, although they clearly state that they don't feel the same about the institution and its priests and bishops. (Cardinal Law's picture is taken down from the wall and torn in half.) Paul and his brother, however, have left the Church permanently and it is Joe who speaks the final words of "Hand of God"...

"What would Jesus do today about these men who built their powerful corporate structure on top of his lessons? What would He say of their betrayals, selfishness, their shocking arrogance that the priest Laurena had demonstrated to me so many years ago?"



## WILL THE CHURCH EVER BE ACCOUNT- ABLE? continued from page 3

transparent in reporting were listed on their website. Another option they offered was a Voice of Compassion Fund. The move was successful in making its point in that less than 50% of the parishes met their goals.

By 2005, the emphasis focussed on the accessible cash reserves (\$119 million), an amount considered excessive. This grew to \$188 million in 2006; the diocese denied they had this much in reserve. LIVOTF is now in the process of forming a group of financial experts to confirm their allegations.

While all these moves and countermoves were underway, LIVOTF members spoke to the people in each of the parishes, explaining the organization and its goals and inviting them to join or establish an affiliate. This had remarkable success, as there are now dozens of small affiliates with 400 members. Regional meetings are held regularly and usually draw about 200 people. VOTF is indeed alive and well on LI!

### SAVE THE DATE!

**Saturday, March 31 at 2 P.M.**

**The Rev. Richard McBrien**

Will Speak On

### **The Future of the Church**

In The Pontificate of Benedict XVI

At the Farmington Community Center

(Unionville Section of Farmington)

Donation: \$20 at door, \$18 in advance

Send Check By March 15 to

The American Catholic, 270

Farmington Avenue

Suite 306-H, Farmington, CT 06032

Directions: From I-84 Take exit 39 West onto

Rte 4 to Unionville. Turn left onto Rte 177.

At 2nd light turn left onto New Britain Avenue.

The Center is 8/10 mile ahead on left.

# VOTE SPEAKS OUT

## A SEASON FOR HEALING

(Letter to the editor of the Hartford Courant, Christmas Day 2006)

At a time when many Catholics think that the clerical abuse crisis is over, Pope Benedict XVI's official pastor reminded the pope and all of us that there is still much work to be done.

The Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa urged the pope and his top associates to "cry before God" while working to renew and reconcile the Church "with honest confrontation of the sins committed against abused children."

Five years ago, in January 2002, the Boston Globe began a series on the sexual abuse of children by priests in the Archdiocese of Boston. This anniversary and the continuing revelations about clerical sexual abuse remind us that the task of reconciliation is not finished. In addition, groups such as SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) remind us that the works of justice and the protection of children are not complete.

I urge all Roman Catholics to use the days between Dec. 28, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, and Jan. 6, the Feast of Epiphany, to pray that victims of sexual abuse find healing and strength, that the perpetrators and those who covered up their crimes be brought to justice and that the Catholic Church openly admit its sinfulness and begin the journey of renewal and reconciliation that Father Cantalamessa recommended to the pope.

**William Carroll**, West Hartford

## DIocese OF BRIDGEPORT, ARE YOU LISTENING?

(Letter to NEW YORK TIMES, 1.21.07, CT Section)

To the Editor:

Now that Judge Jon Alander of the State Superior Court has ordered publication of records relating to priestly sexual abuse within the Diocese of Bridgeport, Bishop William E. Lori, as you suggest ("Using the Victims Yet Again," editorial, Jan 7) should abandon his planned appeal. He should also apologize for justifying suppression of these documents to protect the victims.

The diocese has already expended more than \$37 million to settle cases involving priestly sexual abuse and has incurred untold legal expenses in its effort to deny the Catholic people full knowledge of this shameful chapter in diocesan history. The money spent to pay

fees for repeated appeals seeking to impose secrecy on the actions of our priests and bishops could better be used to care for the poor and the needy.

The time for stonewalling has come to an end. The time for accountability and transparency is at hand.

**Joseph F. O'Callaghan, Norwalk** The writer is a board member, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

## Letter to the editor:

It has been said that 70% of the people in the pews will believe anything a bishop says regardless of any evidence to the contrary. It has been proven once again.

As a result of an incredible blunder by Bishop Reilly, Bruno Primavera was employed by the Norwich Diocese despite the warnings by a Canadian bishop who knew Primavera. After Primavera was credibly accused of abuse, Bishop Reilly blundered a second time and transferred him to Saint Mary's in New London – a parish with an elementary school. What was Reilly thinking! He transferred a pedophile to a parish with young boys close at hand. As sure as Spring follows Winter, Primavera did it again. But there was no action to get rid of him until the civil authorities (a Waterford policeman) caught him in a car with a young boy. Only then did Bishop Reilly take steps to get rid of this pedophile.

So far, Bruno Primavera has cost the parishioners of the Norwich Diocese \$3.1 million dollars! But that's not the end of it; there's one more case pending against Bruno Primavera. As a former contributor to my parish and the Norwich Diocese, I have a question for Bishop Cote. WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM? The questionable accounting practices used by the Diocese will cloud the issue sufficiently for the 70% who will believe anything anyway.

When are the 70% going to wake up? When are they going to demand clear, understandable accounting by the diocese? The current accounting practices make ENRON look good!

More importantly, when are the 70% going to realize that the sexual abuse crisis is not over? When are the 70% going to realize that some members of the clergy are still abusing children? When are the 70% going to realize that bishops are still covering up and stonewalling? When are the 70% going to realize that as long as they go on believing everything the bishops say without question, the cover-up will continue?

**Casey Serra**, Norwich, CT.

# AROUND THE CHURCH - NEWS IN BRIEF

By Joanne Blair

**GUMBLETON "REMOVED"**...Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, who retired last February at the request of the Congregation of Bishops, announced on December 16 that he was being removed from St. Leo's where he has served for 24 years. There was no hint of any destination, just removal; his Peace Pulpit is silent. Is it not ironic that while Gumbleton is tossed aside by the Church he loved and served well, Law is rewarded for covering up sexual abuse by his priests with an honored place in Rome?

**LAY EXPERTS ADVISE TIGHTER FINANCIAL CONTROLS**...Just one month after the release of the Villanova Study which states that 85% of Catholic dioceses have been embezzlement victims during the last five years, the Accounting Practices Committee advised the USCCB that tighter financial controls were necessary. However, the advice continues to leave all financial controls in the hands of the hierarchy, the clergy and the finance councils.

**SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS SEEK DAMAGES FROM VATICAN**...U.S. District Court Judge John J. Heyburn of Louisville ruled that three men can pursue negligence claims against the Vatican over allegations of sexual abuse. Allegations include the fact that the Vatican knew or suspected its priests were child molesters but failed to warn the authorities about them because of its policy prohibiting this. The lawsuit is the first of its kind.

**A BIT OF GOOD NEWS**...Rockville Center, LI, Diocese acted swiftly when informed that Father Peter Allen of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church had a credible sexual abuse charge. He was placed on administrative leave the following day after the diocese received the information. His parishioners were notified of the reason for his removal at subsequent services. Peggy O'Neill, VOTF co-chairman, applauded the diocese for their quick action. "It certainly is different from the way they acted in the past. The response was never that quick and open," she commented.

**"DELIVER US FROM EVIL" IS NOMINATED FOR ACADEMY AWARD**... This harrowing story of child sexual abuse by a serial child molester who went free for two decades features both victims and their families and the molester himself. Oliver O'Grady, whose youngest victim was 9 months old, speaks candidly about his career as a sexual predator, recounting his deeds in detail. Although his superiors (including Cardinal Mahoney) were aware of his crime, they moved him around rather than turning him in to the authorities. (After serving a prison term O'Grady moved to Ireland where he now lives, looked after by Catholic priests.) "Deliver Us From Evil" also looks into the history of the Catholic Church and how its leadership has protected the hierarchy at the expense of the people in the pews.

## **OFFICE MANAGER WANTED** For **THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC**

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## A STRONG CLEAR VOICE IN THE FAITH-SCIENCE DEBATE

The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief By Francis Collins . Published 2006, Free Press, New York 294 pp. \$26.00 (Less online)

*Review and commentary by Tom Malone*

Faithful Catholics, living in an era when faith and science are often at odds ("one of the most consequential challenges facing the church" Natl. Catholic Reporter, 9/1/06), will welcome the New York Times best-seller *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* by Francis Collins. The author is a distinguished geneticist and long-time head of the Human Genome Project. His book opens new and fresh perspectives for the faithful who are both interested in the exploration of the future of our church and wearied by reading Steve Sheehan's daily e-mails on the fumbling by an intransigent hierarchy focussed on preserving the luster of a wounded church but untutored in the art of nurturing youth sexually violated by a few rogue priests.

Home schooled by his mother on a dirt farm in Virginia until he was ten, Collins was inspired by a charismatic chemistry teacher in high school. This encounter led to graduate studies in biochemistry at Yale and the "digital glory" involved in DNA and RNA. Ultimately, he wound up at the University of North Carolina medical school. Along the way, he moved from agnosticism to atheism until an elderly patient suffering from untreatable angina confronted him with the question "What do you believe?" This query prompted extensive soul searching, a survey of the major religions of the world, and finally to C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* and the concept of a universal Moral Law or the "law of right behavior." This Law involves "agape" a kind of selfless love that cannot be explained away as "cultural artifact or evolutionary by-product" but is "a controlling power outside the universe" -- that is, God. Collins describes God as "holy and righteous" -- "good and loves His creatures" -- and capable of generating a "sense of longing" for fellowship with Him among those creatures.

An epiphany occurred in the summer of 1989 when he was a volunteer physician at a small mission hospital in Nigeria where a young farmer, threatened with death because of a large amount of fluid in his chest was brought to him. A highly risky procedure by a well-trained cardiologist equipped with an ultrasound machine was urgently needed. Neither was available in the small impoverished village of Eku in Nigeria. However, when the farmer was advised of his precarious state, with the option that Dr. Collins might attempt the task, the patient's response was calmly positive.

The procedure was successful and the farmer later commented, "I get the sense that you are wondering why you came here. . . . You came here for one reason. You came here for me." The impact on Collins was profound. He describes it in these words: "the simple act of trying to help just one person in a desperate situation where my skills were poorly matched to the challenge turned out to be the most meaningful of human experiences... it pointed clearly at the goodness that we all hope desperately to find within ourselves and others. . . . God himself revealing His holy nature . . . to seek goodness in all of our hearts."

It is within the context above that Collins addresses the central question posed in this book: "In this modern era of cosmology, evolution, and the human genome, is there still the possibility of a richly satisfying harmony between the scientific and spiritual worlds?"

Beginning with Paul Tillich's assertion, "Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith" Collins describes a "poignant sense of longing, falling somewhere between pleasure and grief, [that] caught me by surprise and caused me to wonder from whence came such strong emotion and how might such an experience be recovered."

This baring of the author's soul is followed by three easily understandable chapters on The Origin of the Universe, Life on Earth, and The Lessons of the Human Genome.

In the subsequent chapters, the author discusses four options: Atheism and Agnosticism, Creationism, Intelligent Design, and Biologos (Science and Faith in Harmony). In Collins' words, the last option is, "the most scientifically and spiritually satisfying" of the four. His exhortation to believers employs the words of Copernicus: "To know the mighty works of God; to comprehend His wisdom and majesty and power; to appreciate, in degree, the wonderful working of His laws, surely all this must be a pleasing and acceptable mode of worship to the Most High, to whom ignorance cannot be more grateful than knowledge." To the scientist, he writes: "Opening one's self to the life of the spirit can be indescribably enriching. Don't

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## A STRONG CLEAR VOICE

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put off a consideration of these questions of eternal significance until some personal crisis or advancing age forces a recognition of spiritual impoverishment."

In a final chapter, Collins calls for "a truce in the escalating war between science and spirit. ... Science is not threatened by God; it is enhanced. God is most certainly not threatened by science; He made it all possible. So let us together seek to reclaim the solid ground of an intellectually and spiritually satisfying synthesis of all great truths."

In an important Appendix Collins goes beyond exhortation and deals directly with Bioethics: The Moral Practice of Science. His main thesis is the centrality of the Moral Law — the innate knowledge of right and wrong discovered through careful contemplation.

What wisdom does Collins leave with us? He concludes, "Difficult decisions arise when a conflict appears between the mandate to heal and the moral obligation to do no harm. But we have no alternative but to face those dilemmas head-on, attempt to understand all of the nuances, include the perspectives of all the stakeholders and try to reach a consensus. The need to succeed at these endeavors is just one more compelling reason why the current battles between the scientific and spiritual worldview need to be resolved." Sound advice as we address new challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. In his bridge-building new book *The Creation*, E. O. Wilson remarks that religion and science are "the two most powerful forces in the world today." How they choose to interact will be crucial to the prospects for humanity.

**Spread  
the word.**

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

## ***A Voice from the Past***

**Thomas Merton**

speaks

"... Authority has simply been abused too long in the Catholic Church and for many people it just becomes utterly stupid and intolerable to have to put up with the kind of jackassing around that is posed in God's name. It is an insult to God Himself and in the end it can only discredit all idea of authority and obedience. There comes a point where they simply forfeit the right to be listened to."

(Hidden Ground of Love, p.230)

# GREATER WEST HARTFORD APPROACH TO FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Prepared By Bill Carroll

## Parish Annual Financial Reports: Questions and Answers

Starting in 2005, the Voice of the Faithful national organization began a Campaign for Financial Accountability.

"We have a vision of a Church that is fully transparent and accountable to the laity at all of its levels. We imagine a Church that openly provides financial reporting in all parishes and dioceses. We anticipate a Church that will honor the many gifts of the laity by including us in all levels of decision-making within our Church. In order to bring about such a glorious day, we must begin with a first step - a campaign for parish and diocesan financial accountability, to include active lay participation in all matters of Church finances."

### Campaign for Financial Accountability Overview from the VOTF National Office

The goal of this multi-year campaign is to have parishes and dioceses prepare and present audited, 'user-friendly' financial reports that inform the laity of the financial state of their local Church and the resources available to it for future needs. This campaign fits into the third goal of VOTF: to work for structural change within the Church.

As a local affiliate of VOTF, the Greater West Hartford VOTF (GWH-VOTF) is participating in the campaign. Our focus is on parish annual financial reports. For one of its projects, the GWH-VOTF undertook the task of gathering a sample of annual financial reports from local parishes.

Based on what we learned from this sample, we have prepared this document, which is a series of questions and answers concerning parish financial reports. We hope this document assists parishioners in understanding and evaluating their parish's annual financial report.

At the beginning of the year, every pastor in the Archdiocese of Hartford is required to submit a detailed report of his parish's finances for the previous year to the Archdiocese and another, shorter report to the members of his parish. Since total parish incomes and expenditures range from several hundred thousand dollars to close to one million dollars, such reports are important documents in the life of

any parish.

**Q.** Why is the pastor required to submit these reports?

**A.** The pastor is the person who is entrusted with the "goods" of the parish, i.e., the financial and material resources of the parish. Canon Law (the Church law) states that the pastor is to fulfill his functions "with the diligence of a good householder" and to "exercise vigilance so that the goods entrusted to his care are in no ways lost or damaged". These reports give evidence to the Archbishop and to the parishioners that the pastor is fulfilling these duties.

**Q.** Who helps the pastor prepare the parish report and budget?

**A.** According to Canon Law, each parish is to have a Finance Council, whose members are appointed by the pastor. The role of the parish Finance Council is to advise and assist the pastor in financial matters. Its members sign the annual report that is submitted to the Archdiocese, and their names and contact information should be included in the report to the parish. The pastor may also request the input of the Parish Council in this activity.

**Q.** Are parishes required to submit a financial report to the State of Connecticut?

**A.** No. In our state each parish is a private, non-profit corporation. However, state law exempts religious organizations such as parishes from filing the financial reports that other private, non-profit corporations have to submit annually. The officers of the parish corporation are the Archbishop, a Vicar General of the Archdiocese (one of the auxiliary bishops), the pastor and the two lay trustees who are appointed by the pastor.

**Q.** Why should the parish financial report be audited?

**A.** An audited financial report gives the parishioners a level of confidence and trust in their parish and its financial management. Studies have shown that when people have high levels of confidence and trust in their parishes, they contribute more.

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**Q.** What makes for a good financial report?

**A.** A parish annual financial report should be:

**Clear:** The manner in which the various income and expense categories are presented should allow the reader to easily understand the details of the report.

**Complete:** The amount of information contained in the report should give the reader a full and complete picture of the parish's financial status, including income, expenditures and available assets.

**Comparable:** The report should include the details from the previous year's financial report and the budget for the coming year so that the reader can see any progress or decline in the parish's financial status.

**Q.** How detailed should these reports be?

**A.** Parish financial reports should be detailed enough to show the parishioners how their donations are being used to operate the parish and to fund its ministries. The parishioners should be able to easily understand how much money is coming into the parish and how much is being spent on the various activities in the parish. For example, it should be clear to the parishioners how much money is allotted to the various education programs – for a school, for religious education for children or for young people or for adults. The reports should detail how much money is allotted to the liturgy and music programs. The parishioners should see how much is being given to social action projects in the parish or in the community. The reports should also detail the financial assets and/or liabilities of the parish.

**Q.** What can parishioners learn from reading the parish's annual report?

**A.** A good financial report tells the story of a parish. It speaks, first of all, about the current financial health of the parish. It points out the priorities of the parish, seen in those areas where the parish allocates the larger portions of its money. It also provides a look into the future of the parish, showing whether the parish has sufficient resources set aside to meet any anticipated growth in its membership and programs, as well as any future maintenance projects.

**Q.** Does any money from the parish go to the Archdiocese?

**A.** Yes. There is a 'cathedraticum' which is a Latin word that refers to the cathedral or center of the Archdiocese. The 'cathedraticum' is a 5.5% tax on the ordinary income of the parish (from the general parish collections). This tax, along with the income from the Archbishop's Annual Appeal, goes to support the operation and ministries of the Archdiocese. There is a similar 5.5% tax on the ordinary income of the parish that is levied on parishes that do not have schools. This tax is used to support parish schools throughout the Archdiocese.

**Q.** What supplementary information should accompany the financial report?

**A.** The annual report should be supplemented by a commentary that includes statistics about the membership of the parish, attendance at liturgies and parish programs, reception of the sacraments and the various educational programs of the parish. This information gives perspective to the financial figures in the report.

**Q.** Should there be any kind of follow-up after the financial report is presented?

**A.** Yes. After presenting the report to their parishioners, pastors and parish finance council members should hold "town meetings" where they explain and discuss the report and where the parishioners can ask questions. Additionally, such "town meetings" can discuss the parish budget and its relationship to the future goals of the parish.

**Q.** If the parish does not hold a "town meeting", to whom should parishioners speak if they have questions about the annual report?

**A.** Anyone having questions about the report should speak to the pastor and/or a member of the Finance Council.

