

4-10-08 - Available Online for Catholics to Sign

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Voice of the Faithful Petition to Pope Calls All Catholics to Transform Church

According to Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), the Catholic Church will continue to decline unless it uniformly treats survivors of sexual abuse with justice and compassion rather than treating them as litigants; makes bishops who transferred pedophile priests more accountable for their past actions; encourages and welcomes greater lay participation in decision making; and provides full financial transparency and accountability in all its governance matters.

"Transformation and renewal of the Church is possible," says VOTF President Dan Bartley of Long Island. "We envision a Church that is open, transparent, and accountable and look forward to a Church that embraces the gifts and talents of the laity."

But many more lay Catholics need to make their voices heard if that transformation is to occur, says Bartley. "As a first step, we invite all Catholics to participate in this transformation by signing a petition we have online calling for greater accountability and lay involvement in our Church."

Voice of the Faithful is making an online petition available on its website, <http://www.votf.org/>, for concerned Catholics to sign. This petition will be provided to the Pope's U.S. representative, the Papal Nuncio, at the end of April. The petition is a follow up to a full page ad which VOTF placed in the New York Times on April 8. The ad can also be viewed on the group's web site.

The text of the petition is as follows:

TO POPE BENEDICT XVI AND HIS FELLOW BISHOPS

On the occasion of the Pope's April 2008 visit to the United States

Please join Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) in calling all Catholics to transform our Church.

Join your voice with thousands of others who must raise our voices through petition because the Pope has scheduled no discussions or listening sessions with laity. Will he hear the concerns of the faithful without such conversations?

We Catholics are still addressing the clergy sex abuse scandal, one of the worst crises in the history of our Church. One-third of those raised Catholic in the U.S. no longer call themselves Catholics, according to a recent survey. Numbers of priests are declining; many parishes and schools are closing; we face massive financial crises.

Voice of the Faithful, with more than 35,000 members, proposes concrete solutions to address this crisis:

1. Treat survivors of sexual abuse with the justice and compassion our faith demands.
2. Hold bishops accountable to the people they serve.
3. Embrace full participation of Catholic women and men in Church decision-making.
4. Require full financial transparency and accountability in all governance matters.

We believe these steps will produce:

- An open, transparent and accountable Church

- A participative Church embracing the gifts and talents of the baptized

- A Church governed by compassion, informed by justice, empowered by equality, and animated to act collegially

We urge all clergy to listen to the voices of the faithful as we join together to inspire our Church to become a community of believers worthy of our founder, Jesus Christ. We pledge our energy toward realizing these changes.

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Pope Benedict will be arriving in Washington, D.C., on April 15, making several appearances in our nation's capital on April 16 and 17, and then going to New York City for appearances April 18 and 19 before departing the U.S. on April 20.

CONTACT: To arrange interviews with Voice of the Faithful representatives from the national office or from your local area, please contact John Moynihan 617-558-5252, 617-680-2131 (c).
