

VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL
IN THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT
September 4, 2003
Congregational Church on the Green

The meeting was opened with prayer. Joe O'Callaghan, Chairman, welcomed the 80+ current and new attendees.

Review: For the benefit of new members, Joe gave a brief review of the chapter's history, including Bishop Lori's ban on meeting in our parishes, and our subsequent welcome by Rev. Henry Yordon, of the Congregational Church on the Green. However, Joe added that we are still deeply saddened by the bishop's ban, and are sending another letter appealing to him to rescind his ban and requesting his review of our course of study over the past 18 months. After reading the letter, sheets for signatures were distributed to anyone wishing to add names to the letter.

Voice of Compassion Fund – Mary Jane Range, Treasurer, reported on our attempt to make donations of \$2500 each to three charities of the Diocesan Catholic Charities. One, the Queen of Clergy Home for Retired Priests, has not yet returned calls. Administrators of the other two, the Thomas Merton Center, Bridgeport, and Family Stages, Bridgeport, were both appreciative of the bequests and were willing to attend tonight's meeting to accept checks. However, subsequently Mary Jane received an email from Brian Cronin, the Executive Director of Catholic Charities, stating that neither of the two aforementioned administrators would be available to attend our meeting and that we should mail the checks. Mary Jane read the email and stated that efforts are being made to find a way to present the checks to all three designated beneficiaries. Rev. Christopher Walsh was asked if he might investigate this matter on our behalf; he replied that he was present at our meetings only as a liaison.

Mary Jane reported a cash balance of \$9410.76. The complete report may be found on our website www.votfbpt.org

Announcements:

-October 1st – The 3rd Annual Anne Drummey O'Callaghan lecture on Women in the Church, 8:00pm, at the Quick Center, Fairfield University. Dolores Leckey, Senior Fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown U., Washington, DC, will speak on "New Ministers, New Leaders." Free and open to the public. Note: Since this is not being sponsored by VOTF, posters and notices in parish bulletins are allowed.

-October 9th – Our next meeting – on the **2nd Thursday** in October, due to the lecture on Oct. 1st. Since we are still trying to find meeting locations in surrounding towns, the meeting site has not yet been confirmed.

-October 25th – Saturday daylong major event for VOTF in CT, NY, and NJ, at Fordham University. The website for this conference of a powerful group of speakers and registration information is www.votf.org/octconference and is continuously updated. Joe commented on his own exhilarating experience a year ago when some 4,000 Catholics wanting to make our Church better met in Boston. He added that more volunteers are needed and that buses will be made available as needed.

-September 16th- The Greenwich/Westchester Chapter will meet ;details and directions on our website www.votfbpt.org

-Letters to Newspapers-R. Maiberger continued to encourage letter writing to newspapers.

-Congregational Church- Joe asked all present to keep Rev. Yordon, recovering from hip surgery, in their prayers. The collection for our contribution for use of this church was taken up.

Speaker: Paul Dinter – introduced by Joe as having worked for many years as Chaplain of Columbia University. Dinter left the priesthood, was laicized, is now married with children, and directs an outreach project for the homeless in Manhattan. His book, THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ALTAR describes his experience and is available this evening.

In his very well received talk, Dinter began by referring to John Henry Newman who, in 1845, rejected a form of Christianity which refused to accept change and clung with obstinacy to the notions of the past. Newman believed that if the Church, a living organism, did not grow and change, it would wither and die. He felt further if doctrine could not change, it, too, would die. Today, Dinter said, there has to be some real dialogue – dialectic tension – which makes up something that is alive. Newman defined corruption, not as evil acts of priests, but as the product of good intentions of the Church's hierarchy. Dinter said that Newman's thinking was a result of his reading the Church Fathers' idea of a divine economy of salvation – the way God is present in the world.

We believe in the unfolding of a truth, that if doctrine is historical it has to be a living organism. The hierarchy seems to have resisted doctrine as it moves.

The legacy of Vatican II, Dinter said, is about the development of doctrine through contemplation, study, the Church's sense of spiritual reality via the ministry of preaching. The life of the church takes place in the people's lives and in the pews – more than in the clerical monopoly of teaching.

The following ideals for the Church were offered by Newman:

-Different parts of the Church should be given different work. Newman called them “conflicting duties.” Sometimes they will clash with one another. They are very diverse ministries – teaching, governance, sanctification – which will lead to magnificent checks and balances. The Spirit has been given to all of us in different ways. The Church lives through the inter-action of these ministries:

- Teaching – theologians, people who study, a task for the ordained; this ministry takes place alongside of the ministry of governance.
- Governance – Bishops and the Pope should be collegial leaders. Today the ruling party monopolizes the hierarchy; they don’t want us to know or share our perception of human sexuality. Part of the problem is that our notions of sexuality are being verbalized to us by unmarried sons of devout mothers.
- Sanctification – happens in parishes through both pastors and the faithful at worship.

Of these three “offices,” one alone is not sufficient to the task of being the Church.

Dinter summed up by stating that in many ways the Church today reflects the Church’s stance against Galileo, what Newman referred to as “the obstinacy in the notions of the past.” The idealization of sexuality is not based on clerical experience. We need the ministry of the ordained but it does not mean that we cannot be human. As for the maleness of the priesthood, Christ’s choosing twelve men is a truism, not a truth. The refusal to accept women to the priesthood is the same as the refusal to admit the Gentiles to Baptism.

A lively Question/Answer session followed.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Seymour, Recording Secretary

ADDENDA

1. Copies of Paul Dinter’s précis of his talk will be available at the October 9th meeting.

2. About John Cardinal Newman, priest/scholar, 1801 – 1890

Newman was a leading priest in the Church of England whose conversion to Catholicism was a major event of the 1840s. Newman was a popular speaker and a scholar at Oxford, making his conversion all the more welcome to Catholics and shocking to Anglicans. Newman had been ordained as an Anglican priest in 1825; he was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1847; and in 1879 he was created a Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. His *Apologia Vita Sua* (1864) is considered a classic among religious autobiographies. Because of his writing “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine” in 1859, he is widely regarded to be the “father of Vatican II.”

A sheet covering more information about John Cardinal Newman will be available at the October 9th meeting. Also, many sources on the Internet are available.