

VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL  
IN THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

June 3, 2004

Congregational Church on the Green

Chairman, Joe O'Callaghan, welcomed approximately 55 people in attendance and led the group in prayer.

Financial Report – Mary Jane Range, Treasurer, reported a cash balance of \$31,178, of which \$10,664 has been collected to date for the Voice of Compassion Fund. The goal of the Fund this year is to donate \$2500 each to five charities, anticipating a total of \$12,500.

Election Report – Jim Alvord announced those elected to the VOTF Board for the year 2004-2005. With forty e-mail responses, the new Board includes Jim Alvord, Jim Butler, Jeanne Fogg, Marge Hickey, Marilyn Kirschner, Annette Maiberger, Richard Maiberger, Tom Malarkey, Peg Mooney, Bob Mulligan, Joe O'Callaghan, Bill O'Sullivan, Gloria Seymour, Dick Vicenzi, and Tony Wiggins.

**This newly elected Board will hold its first meeting on Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm, at the HealthMarket Board Room.**

May 1 Conference at Fairfield U. – Joe reviewed this conference, well-received by approximately 100 people which was concluded by a very spirit-filled liturgy celebrated by Rev. Francis Hannafey, S.J, and prepared by Marge Hickey. (A copy of Joe's overview is available on the website). Tonight, Michael Powel, one of the survivors who participated in a segment of the conference, was present and Joe invited him to comment. Michael stated that a judge in his case has decided that there was probable cause; therefore, the case will go forward, in spite of Bishop Lori's denial of any knowledge of the accusation which Bishop Lynch of St.Petersburg, FL advised Michael that he would relay to Bishop Lori.

May 22 Tri State Forum, NYC – This Forum was a follow-up of the Tri-State Conference at Fordham last October. The purpose was to focus on the future of the National Review Board and the audits promised. Prior to the issuance of reports, several bishops wrote to Bishops Gregory asking that the audits be postponed. Justice Anne Burke, Chair of the NRB, stated that at a Bishops' Meeting in May it was decided that the issue would be discussed at the USCB Conference in Denver on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Rev. Joseph O'Hare, President Emeritus of Fordham U., spoke of the need for change in the institutional culture, not the doctrine, of the Church. Pamela Hayes, a lawyer and member of the NRB, also spoke, encouraging continued forums of this nature. (More coverage of this Forum may be found on our website.)

Annual Picnic – Sheila Rietano announced that in place of a July meeting, we will have our annual potluck picnic, this year, on **July 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm to 9:00pm, at the Penfield II Pavilion, Fairfield Beach**. More specific information will be forthcoming, by mail, e-mail, and on our website. There is a charge of \$10 per person to cover the rental fee. Members may register this evening and indicate the food item they wish to bring.

Peace Prayer Vigil – Sheila also announced that on the second Friday of every month, there will be a prayer service for peace at St.Jerome Church, 23 Half Mile Road, Norwalk, 7:30pm – 8:00pm. All are welcome.

Next General Meeting – September 2<sup>nd</sup> – Nancy Dallevale, of the Religious Studies Department of Fairfield University, will be our guest speaker.

Collection – taken to help defray our donation to the Congregational Church on the Green, our gracious hosts.

Speaker for the Evening – Dr. Margaret Roylance - Joe introduced Dr. Roylance, Chair of the Boston VOTF Structural Change Working Group (press release posted on our website). She opened her remarks by answering the question, What do you mean by “structural change?” - a question often asked and more often misunderstood. To begin with, she stated that the sexual abuse crisis was due to organizational weaknesses. The Vatican's vision of the Church actually enabled the abuse of children. She presented a history of the SCWG which was unanimously approved by the VOTF Representative Council and sent to every bishop in the country. The group is advised by Rev. Ladislaus Orsy, a canon lawyer, and fosters implementing the structures we now have. She emphasized that change must start at the parish level. Work must be done within the parish by collaborating with pastors. There is no “hidden agenda” – we respect the teaching authority of the Church. Our goal is meaningful lay involvement in the life of the Church. Dr. Roylance presented with slides the structure of the Church. Diocesan statutes and norms carry more weight than Canon Law. Each bishop is the official legislator of his diocese; he has authority over his diocese; no one checks on him.

As for the Laity, they may participate in diocesan and parish pastoral and finance councils, which are required by Canon Law. VOTF is recommending the establishment of parish Safety Councils. Dr.Roylance strongly urged the establishment of regional and vicariate lay councils, which are representative of the diocese and which could spawn the creation of diocesan lay councils which are truly representative of the diocese.

A question was raised about the forming of a Bridgeport Diocese Lay Council last year. No one has had any report of its activities or the frequency of its meetings. Diocesan guidelines which call for a representative group (not necessarily elected) should be available to all.

**REMINDER–No July Meeting; VOTF potluck picnic on July 7<sup>th</sup>. PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE [www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org)**

The meeting closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gloria Seymour, Recording Secretary

