

6/28/07 - Open letter from Region I reps regarding "strategy change"

Dear Region 1 VOTF member,

You may recently have read an article in the New York Times about VOTF, or read comments others have made about that article. (See link at end of email for the article itself.) Much of it is supportive of VOTF; some of it is not so flattering. For example, an internal statement that Bill Casey, chair of the Board of Trustees, made in April about internal dissension keeps being repeated -- but while internal struggles can be distracting and time-consuming, our discussions, effort, and compromise in the past months have greatly diminished the disagreements characterized by some as "infighting."

But we would like to address another aspect of that article, the one the Times labeled a "strategy change."

Their reference shortchanges a recently passed NRC resolution that was initiated by the Goal 2 Support Priests Working Group; connects that resolution to "strategy" when it is really not; and calls it a shift when it actually is simply an outgrowth of what we have been doing all along.

The article, because it quotes leaders of VOTF, also skips over (in our opinion) the grass-roots genesis of the effort.

It also unfortunately pushes forward the resolution when Working Group 2, the VOTF Officers, and the Marketing & Communications group within VOTF were still working on the information package presenting it. That information package will include a press release, contact persons within each region, quotes from Mary Pat Fox and WG 2, and talking points for responding to media queries. It also would cover the REST of the resolution, which the Times story does not even mention.

Affiliate leaders will be seeing all of this soon, and you will be reading more (we hope) about the effort in July. For now, though, because the news has been released in a half-baked manner, we thought it wise to send you the entire resolution so that you can see for yourselves what WG2 is launching, with support of the other working groups, the Council, and the Officers.

Peace,

Your Region 1 Reps: Donna Doucette, Ron DuBois, Pat Gomez, Jane Merchant, and Steve Sheehan

TEXT OF RESOLUTION:

Voice of the Faithful invites fellow Catholics, laity and clergy, to join us in calling upon the Holy See to conduct an ecclesial review of mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests. We call for this study to be conducted as a serious, extensive, unbiased review, utilizing the insights of history, modern psychology, sociology, and pastoral practice, of the discipline of celibacy in the Latin Rite. And we call for the study to be conducted without prejudging the outcome.

This public call inviting others, as individuals and groups, to join us, would coincide with a nationwide effort to engage Catholic laity through an exploration of the Current State of the Priesthood and its Ability to Meet the Needs of the Faith Community. This exploration would focus upon such things as access to the Eucharist for the laity, diocesan priests' workload, lowering of standards for seminary candidates, priests' morale, financial security issues for priests, the impacts of mandated celibacy, and the decline in vocations to the priesthood. This effort will be planned and implemented by the Priest Support Working Group of Voice of the Faithful, an international organization of Catholic laity.

After gathering a wide base of support, Voice of the Faithful will issue a formal petition to Rome calling for this review.