



Voice of the Faithful™

"Keep the Faith, Change the Church"™

March 7, 2004

VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL CONTRIBUTES \$10,000 TO SEVERAL CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Contacts: Joe O'Callaghan, 203-853-9578
Bob Mulligan, 203-847-5128

Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport over the last few months has contributed a total of \$10,000 to four Catholic Charities. Donations of \$2,500 each were given to the Merton Center and Family Stages, both in Bridgeport, the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford, and the Retirement Fund of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Wilton.

The Merton Center serves the homeless as well as young mothers and children, and provides a medical clinic, support groups for men and women, as well as after school programs. Mary Ann Furlong, the director of the Merton Center, welcomed representatives from VOTF and guided them through the facility. Maria Reyes Medina, the director of Family Stages, explained how her agency helps to provide housing and support services to pregnant and post-partum women with substance abuse and mental health problems.

One of the three goals of VOTF is to support good priests and this seemed to be one practical way of expressing the laity's gratitude for the services of so many good priests in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Msgr. Louis DeProfio, rector of Queen of the Clergy, a residence for retired priests, guided the group through the chapel, the dining room and other rooms in the home.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame, a vital component of Catholic life in the Bridgeport Diocese, have long served diocesan Catholic schools and have often sponsored important conferences with notable Catholic speakers. Sr. St. John Vianney, the director of development, spoke movingly of the needs of the retired and infirm members of her community.

Given the concerns of so many Catholics about the diocese's use of parishioners' money to pay settlements for survivors of priestly sexual abuse, VOTF organized a Voice of Compassion--Bridgeport Fund last spring as an alternative to the Bishop's Annual Appeal. Contributions reached slightly more than \$10,000. That money has now been distributed to the charities mentioned above. As additional donations are received in 2004 further distributions will be made.

Contributions to the Voice of Compassion--Bridgeport Fund may be sent to: Voice of the Faithful, PMB 104, 2513 Kings Highway North, Darien CT 06820. Further information about VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport and the Compassion Fund is available at www.votfbpt.org. Information about the national organization and its current three-part petition developed in response to the recent John Jay College report on clergy sex abuse is available at www.votf.org.