



# Voice of the Faithful™

*"Keep the Faith, Change the Church"™*

April 2, 2004

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

## **BRIDGEPORT VOTF COMPASSION FUND**

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In light of the current scandal of priestly sexual abuse and the cover-up by our bishops many Catholics are questioning whether they should contribute to the Bishop's Annual Appeal.

Recognizing the great importance of continuing to fund our parishes, schools, hospitals, soup kitchens, and other diocesan charitable and educational organizations Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport (VOTF) offers an alternative, the Voice of Compassion - Bridgeport Fund. Contributions to the Fund are tax deductible.

The Diocese of Bridgeport recently announced that in the last fifty years 32 priests had sexually abused 107 boys and girls and the Diocese paid \$37,700,000 in settlement costs. That financial outlay ranks Bridgeport, an average size U.S. diocese, fifth among all 195 dioceses. The per capita cost is approximately \$104 for every Catholic man, woman, and child in the Diocese. The number of accused priests is likely higher as Walter W. Curtis, the now deceased bishop of Bridgeport, affirmed in court that he had destroyed files.

Bishop William E. Lori has asserted that none of that money comes from "the Annual Bishop's Appeal, Faith in the Future, individual or group contributions to the Diocese, or parish collections," but rather from insurance (about 41%), investment income, and the sale of unneeded property (about 59%). Where did the money for insurance premiums, investments, and the purchase of disposable property come from, if not out of the pockets of the people in the pews? It is disingenuous to imply that the Catholic community in the Diocese is not hurt by this colossal outlay, the consequence of extraordinary mismanagement. In keeping with the principles of transparency and accountability proclaimed by the bishops, the faithful have a right to demand a detailed financial explanation of the expenditure of \$37,700,000.

Last year \$10,000 was contributed to the Voice of Compassion - Bridgeport Fund. That was distributed in equal amounts to four charities: Merton House and Family Stages, both in Bridgeport, the Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford, and the Retirement Fund of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Wilton. In 2004 Bridgeport VOTF is seeking \$12,500 to enable it to make gifts of \$2,500 to five worthy charities.

Contributions to the Voice of Compassion - Bridgeport Fund may be made by check to Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport ([www.votfbpt.org](http://www.votfbpt.org)) and sent to VOTF, PMB #104, 25-13 Old Kings Highway North, Darien, CT 06820.