

4-24-08 Press Release -VOTF CALLS ON BISHOP FOR MASS OF RECONCILIATION

In response to Pope Benedict XVI's recent appeal to all Catholics "to foster healing and reconciliation, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport is calling on Bishop William E. Lori to celebrate a mass of reconciliation and to encourage each pastor to do so as well.

Speaking in Washington on April 17 Pope Benedict lamented "the pain and harm" caused by priestly sexual abuse of children and emphasized the need to provide "loving pastoral attention" to the survivors.

In the Diocese of Bridgeport thirty priests have been accused of sexually assaulting at least sixty-seven children, causing them untold suffering. Many of the survivors, now grown to adulthood and feeling abandoned by the Church, no longer go to Mass or find it impossible to enter a church.

As one means of acting on Pope Benedict's summons, Voice of the Faithful has written to Bishop Lori asking him to take the lead in furthering the work of reconciliation in three ways: (1) by celebrating a Mass of Reconciliation at least once a year in St. Augustine Cathedral; (2) by exhorting pastors to celebrate a Mass of Reconciliation in each parish at least once a year; and (3) by inviting the survivors to meet in our parishes as a body, if they wish to do so.

Pope Benedict issued a challenge to Catholics everywhere to try to heal this sore on Christ's Body, the Church. By acknowledging the sin, atoning for the harm done, and working for reconciliation, Catholics will take the first steps toward healing and renewing the Church.

The stated mission of Voice of the Faithful, an organization of mainstream Catholics, is to be "a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church." VOTF believes that a reasoned dialogue among bishop, priests, nuns, and laymen and women will contribute to the renewal of the Church.

In order to encourage greater lay participation in the governance of the Church, VOTF developed five proposals for structural change: (1) the election of bishops by the clergy and people of the diocese; (2) the right of parishioners to participate with the bishop in the selection of their pastors; (3) the establishment of elected, representative diocesan pastoral and finance councils with real authority; (4) the establishment of elected, representative parish pastoral and finance councils with real authority; and (5) the right of the faithful as members of a parish corporation consisting of their elected representatives, the bishop, and the pastor, to own church property. The full text of the proposals can be consulted at www.votfbpt.org/proposal.html.

For further information about VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport consult www.votfbpt.org.