

9/13/07 - Voices of the Faithful – A BOOK REVIEW

Loyal Catholics striving for change

Authored by William D'Antonio, and Anthony Pogorelc

Foreword by William J. Byron, SJ, Boston College, The Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Center

One of the most interesting developments in Catholic life in the past decade has been the formation of Voice of the Faithful. This remarkable group of devout, active, and loyal Catholics has emerged as the most forceful voice for church reform in the wake of the priestly abuse scandal. This new book presents both the hard statistics about the group's membership and frank and appreciative analysis of the group's influence.

Contributors: Nancy T. Ammerman, Michele Dillon, William A. Gamson, Mary E. Hines, Robert P. Imbelli, John D. McCarthy

**Endorsements:**

“With sophisticated sociological research and scholarly theological interpretation, William D'Antonio and Anthony Pogorelc have brought together the beginnings of the story of the Voice of the Faithful. It will leave no doubt that this is a movement of the Holy Spirit for the reform of the U.S. Catholic community. Like VOTF itself, Voices of the Faithful does a great service to the Church, helping it to move beyond crisis to renewal.”

- Dr. Thomas H. Groome, Director of Boston College's Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, author, *What Makes Us Catholic*

“D'Antonio and Pogorelc have given us a new understanding of the spiritual energies active in American Catholicism today. They analyze Voice of the Faithful, the fastest-growing of the new movements, in a way which shows us why it arose, who supports it, and what its future prospects are. Voice of the Faithful has its supporters and its detractors. The book combines new research with historical and ecclesiological reflections by six commentators, thus producing the best diagnosis of present-day American Catholic culture available today.”

- Dean Hoge, author of *The First Five Years of Priesthood*

“Voice of the Faithful is the most important popular initiative to emerge from the sexual abuse crisis in the American Catholic Church. Since the storm broke in 2002, reforms of the church's personnel practices have been minimal but Bishops act as if the crisis has been resolved. Priests and religious orders have lost numbers and power, large new cadres of deacons, lay educators, and pastoral ministers are unorganized, older reform advocates have been marginalized, and small groups of conservative Catholics exercise disproportionate influence in Rome and the United States. Almost alone for five years VOTF has stood against the tide. Its members have made the case for justice for survivors of sexual abuse by priests and for reasonable reforms that will ensure truthfulness and accountability in ecclesiastical affairs. Now we have a serious sociological study of this remarkable movement, together with a set of thoughtful analytical essays on the problems confronting VOTF and other Catholic reformers. The data is fascinating and the arguments compelling. Catholics and their church are very important in American life, so VOTF is important. And so is this excellent book.”

- David O'Brien, Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies, College of the Holy Cross

“No one interested in the future of the American Catholic Church can afford to miss this admirable book. Here one finds excellent research on a social movement in progress along with astute analysis of what it all means in historical context. The results of the study are commented upon by six noted scholars and theologians as well as by the authors. I found the work instructive, insightful and fascinating.”

- Sidney Callahan, author of *Created for Joy*

“Voices of the Faithful details one of the most interesting new social movements in the Catholic Church in the United States. The book is a valuable resource for understanding the movement, its membership, and its moment in history.”

- Mary L. Gautier, Senior Research Associate, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University

“The editors’ deep grasp of Catholic doctrine and history makes Voices of the Faithful a fascinating, stimulating, and provocative book. With new insights, and a great flair for narrative, here is the compelling story of those courageous Catholics who with love in their hearts demanded justice for sexual abuse and launched a reform movement. Most importantly Voices of the Faithful sketches a road map for the future which includes addressing questions of faith and morals as well as collaboration with other institutional players. Voices of the Faithful is a must read for those who seek to save the Catholic Church.”

-Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former Lieutenant Governor of Maryland