



Voice of the Faithful Santa Barbara Area

Keep the Faith, Change the Church

www.votfsba.org

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VOTF PROGRESS REPORT

By Peter Kruse

We have moved a long way since our joint decision to form a Voice of the Faithful affiliate in the Santa Barbara area. Since our formation in October 2002, these are some of the activities we have engaged in: we have developed a joint strategy for engagement with the local Church, gathered information from the various parishes and their respective committees, sponsored a workshop on the "Safeguard the Children" program mandated by the Cardinal for every parish in the Archdiocese, attended the public forum at which the current financial statements of the Archdiocese were disclosed and discussed, held talks on the possibilities presented by the Archdiocesan Synod, organized and promoted a Mass for Healing the Body of Christ which reached out to all victims of abuse and presented the human face of the Church to the suffering, organized a forum on priestly formation presented by Msgr. Helmut Hefner, Rector of St. John's Seminary, and established a Web site at www.votfsba.org.

Much remains to be done. We are at the start of a journey to change the way the Church is advised by the laity and decisions are made. As educated, informed and committed Catholics, we are a beacon of hope for the Church in this troubled time.«

New Leadership Team Members:

Jeanne Bret, Marie Foley, Anne Heck and Kathleen Strittmatter to serve 2 year terms.

Susan Dobson, Bob Kroes and Peter Kruse to serve 1 year terms.

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN COMMITTEES

By Marie Foley

In September of 2002, Cardinal Mahony mandated that each parish in the Archdiocese form a committee of lay members for the prevention of abuse of children and young people. At an April 2003 gathering, representatives of four local Safeguard the Children (STC) committees met with the VOTFSBA Sexual Abuse Committee to share information about their committees. These are their reports:

Karen Romofsky, chair of the **Holy Cross** STC committee and her assistant Sr. Debra Flander reported that Holy Cross has about 200 children in their religious education and altar servers program. Karen's committee, with three members so far, has held an initial meeting for parishioners, where they explained their purpose; they have also published information about their work in their parish newsletter. The STC committee has met with their parish council and have placed materials about sexual abuse in various locations in the parish.

The STC committee of **Our Lady of Sorrows** is headed by Christopher Sandner. His committee, made up of 13 members, including representatives from various parish ministries, a doctor and a lawyer, is responsible for about 240 children in Notre Dame School and 200 in the religious education program. After discerning that there were no current sexual abuse problems, the committee decided to focus on assuring parents that their children are safe while under the care of parish personnel. Christopher reported that they have held 2 training sessions (in English and Spanish) for faculty, staff and volunteers, led by Pastor Luis Quihuis »

a police officer and a representative from Child Welfare Services. The training focused on how to identify and report instances of abuse. The committee is also in the process of reviewing and modifying appropriate policies in their handbooks—such as who may drive a child home from school—and they have established fingerprinting and background checks for all staff.

Sr. Mary Sullivan, Director of Religious Education at **St. Joseph's** parish, heads the STC committee. Her committee consists of about 10 members, including 2 teachers and a Boy Scout trainer. They held a meeting on May 1st for all staff who work with children in parish ministries to discuss child abuse prevention.

John Foley reported that **St. Mark's University Parish** has about 100 children in their English and Spanish religious education programs. His committee has 7 members, including those who head the religious education programs, a licensed therapist and the pastor Joe Scott. John announced that they are planning an education program for the entire parish to be held in September. Speakers from CALM will come on successive weekends: the first session will be for adults (in English and Spanish) and the second will be for children divided into three age groups (5-7, 8-10, 11-13). The educators from CALM, who charge a nominal fee for this training, are experts in all aspects of child abuse.

This exchange of information was very helpful to all. It was impressive to learn how much is being accomplished at each parish and to see how each parish has created a program tailored to the needs of their parishioners.«

**VOTFSBA is seeking news about
Safeguard the Children activities in
the following parishes:**

Our Lady of Guadalupe
Our Lady of Mount Carmel
St. Barbara
St. Raphael
San Roque

REFLECTIONS ON THE MASS FOR HEALING THE BODY OF CHRIST

By the VOTFSBA Leadership Team

On Thursday, April 10, 2003, a special Mass was offered at Holy Cross Church. The Lenten liturgy was designed by the VOTFSBA Liturgy Committee to bring together the people of our community who have been hurt in the current church sexual abuse scandal. Dr. Keith Paulson-Thorpe, music director of the Santa Barbara Mission Choir, developed the music and directed the choir from St. Barbara. Tom Heck of St. Mark's parish provided the guitar music and technical assistance.

In the modest church, with walls the color of warm candlelight and the altar draped in sack cloth, the pews filled with people of God wearing symbols of sack cloth and ashes, Fr. Ludo DeClippel, C.J., pastor of Holy Cross, presided at the service. With kindness and hospitality, he welcomed parishioners, visitors and VOFTSBA members.

The entry procession was in silence accompanied by the tolling of a bell. The first reading was from the Book of Lamentations 3:17-25, 49-50, the second from I Corinthians 12:12-36. The Gospel, Mark 2:1-12, read by Deacon Jim Bret of St. Barbara's parish, provided the inspiration for Fr.Ludo's sensitive and erudite homily. Below are highlights from Fr. Ludo's homily:

Referring to the friends of the paralytic in the Gospel reading, Fr. Ludo said: *Those [men] understood what St. Paul said, "When one suffers, all suffer." And they carry their friend (who is luckier than the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethsaida for 38 years who had no one to carry him). I can understand that some of the victims [of abuse] have been paralyzed many years and have cried in loneliness, "No one to carry me." Your presence here shows that you too have understood the words of St. Paul: "When one suffers, all suffer." In the midst of still unhealed wounds, shame and anger, there is a prayer of thanksgiving for the work of healing already done in so many places, levels and ways. So many Catholics have stood up and used their anger to take active responsibility. Thanks in particular to the local Voice of the Faithful for your constructive initiatives and the way you want to carry victims and families in the area and be for them a caring Church community and "companions." The men in the»*



gospel, when they couldn't do their job through usual doors, blazed a new path and new access door. VOTF, priests, and bishops are taking bold initiatives for which they can't fall back on longstanding experience. Breaking open a roof causes some damage to the building, but people in need are more important.

Our liturgy today is also a real Lenten liturgy. The Voice of the Faithful today are the prayers of the faithful: In sackcloth we lament, name our burdens as individuals and parishes and ask forgiveness for ourselves and for others. Somehow the paralyzed man represents all of us in need of healing. In Jesus' presence we ask for His compassion and healing gifts. We cry out to Jesus when the loads are too heavy that He drive out the demons and that He heal us from paralyzing anger. We bring and lay down at the feet of Jesus those priests, especially those we know by name, who did wrong and are also in need of Jesus' forgiveness, and ours--because we have heard "the mercies of the Lord are not exhausted." In the company of women along the difficult road to Calvary, we weep for ourselves and for our children. We lament in contrition and recognize that in our powerlessness we need the graces of Easter and Pentecost.

Our Mass today is, of course, a prayer that all of us not give up; that we continue to support each other, by all means, on this road leading towards healing the victims and families, healing of our church and [seeking the] ongoing purification of our culture. Many priests of our Archdiocese, during the Chrism Mass of next Monday of Holy Week, will recommit to being the best possible shepherds, in the footsteps of Christ. We will celebrate Holy Week liturgies as never before with special intensity and sincerity. With renewal of our baptismal vows on Easter, we will promise that along the road we will stay close to Christ and His light and teachings and therefore, continue to listen respectfully to the pains not yet expressed, to the anger so difficult to let go. We will continue to look for whoever needs to be carried and brought before Jesus for healing. Their prayers will continue to be our prayers. Most of all, we pray that anyone who has been hurt by the Church in whatever way may in turn be healed and become healers of the Church. It is these wounded healers, who, in the most authentic and effective way, can say to the Church: "Your sins are forgiven. Rise and walk."

Following the homily, at the Offertory, the laity offered written petitions for healing which were collected and

presented at the altar. Later, at the end of the Mass, the laity lit their votive candles and Fr. Ludo led the laity in a candlelight procession to the parish hall. There, the petitions were ignited as a symbol of giving our cares to God. A reception was held immediately after the ceremony.«

Archdiocese Sexual Abuse Assistance HOTLINE (800) 355-2545

By Jeanne Bret

Sr. Sheila McNiff, SHCJ, the Archdiocese Sexual Abuse Assistance Ministry Coordinator, has provided the current policy on responding to calls regarding sexual abuse:

The Direct Hotline Call is set up for the purpose of assisting adult survivors. Sr. Sheila McNiff works only with adult survivors. If the caller is reporting a current child abuse case, the caller is instructed to call Detective Barraclough of the Los Angeles Police Department, (213) 485-2883. If the caller is reporting a non-current case, they are informed they may also report to Detective Barraclough. When an adult survivor calls the hotline, Sr. Sheila completes as much of a phone interview as the survivor will allow.

Some callers only want to make sure the abuser is no longer in a situation to harm children or adults. Other callers will allow themselves to meet with Sister for a more personal interview. It is during that interview that the survivor is encouraged to tell their story.

In both cases, Sr. Sheila thanks the survivor for coming forward; she tries to demonstrate the sincere compassion they deserve. She always apologizes for the actions which have hurt them. This apology is often overwhelming to the survivor and can be the beginning of the survivor's empowerment. Counseling is made available to the survivor.

In all cases, the Vicar for Clergy is notified, as is the Oversight Board. The Board is made up of 13 members who are lay specialists and is led by Retired Presiding Superior Court Judge Richard P. Byrne. If the Vicar believes action must be taken before the board can meet, »



he will begin an investigation, and may, if warranted, remove the priest.

If the initial report does not indicate any one is in immediate danger, then the case will go before the board. The Oversight Board will review the case and make a determination of the priest's ministry position. The report is given to Cardinal Roger Mahony for final disposition. The Board does not participate in counseling or monetary decisions.

Sr. Sheila also provided the current policy for the counseling of survivors of sexual abuse:

If a survivor requests/agrees to counseling and does not have a counselor, they may select their own or choose from a referral list which is provided. Counselors will be approved only if they are licensed, have malpractice insurance and have expertise in treating survivors of sexual abuse.

If a survivor is being treated by a counselor at the time of the report, that counselor must meet the above stated requirements. The counselor will also be required to complete an initial report (this and all subsequent reports are common insurance reports) about the status and goals of the treatment. It is preferred that the professional involved be a clinical psychologist. The benefit to the survivor is the highest priority.

After approximately 10 to 12 sessions with the counselor,

Sr. Sheila requests another insurance report. She will review the progress and treatment of the survivor. This is a common practice and the survivor's name is not mentioned. This process is to determine the quality of care the survivor is receiving. Some clients need more counseling, some change counselors, and some feel as if they can move on with their lives. A survivor may contact the office anything in the future if abuse issues become a problem for them and they may receive more counseling.<

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