



Saint Joseph Church

<http://www.stjosephbristol.org>

Rick Swenton, Pastoral Council President

January 20, 2003

Dear Pastoral Council Members,

The next meeting of the Pastoral Council will be held on Monday, January 27, 2003 starting at 7:00 PM with prayer in the chapel.

Minutes of the Pastoral Council meeting of November 25, 2002

Members in attendance:

Don Aiudi
Steve Boisvert
Jim Collins
Jean Degan
Tom Degan
Kim Donahue

Fr. Jim Leary
Bill Myler
Doreen Nocera
Bob Pallotti
Joel Rafaniello
Rick Swenton

Kathy Young
VOTF Representatives
Jayne O'Donnell
Joanne Moran

The Voice of the Faithful

The majority of this meeting was devoted to a presentation by Jayne O'Donnell and Joanne Moran of the organization called Voice of the Faithful.

The Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) is a worldwide organization of over 25,000 mainstream practicing Catholics. Based in Newton, Massachusetts, VOTF formed in early 2002 in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis that erupted in Boston. It now has active members from more than 40 U.S. states and 21 countries.

Voice of the Faithful members represent the "great middle" of the Catholic Church — "the people in the pews." Their philosophy is "centrist," not extremist. They have joined together with the aim of restoring trust between the Catholic laity and hierarchy — and rebuilding the Church, not tearing it down.

They are also "inclusive," as Jesus was inclusive, and they seek to present this model to the Church hierarchy as an alternative to a closed and deeply flawed clerical culture. They are committed to providing an open and safe forum for ALL Catholics to freely and respectfully discuss the challenges of our Church, regardless of their views on specific issues. They take no position on any sex or gender issues and have no interest in doing so. Their goal is to bring the laity to the table of governance and guidance of the Church per the moral imperatives of Vatican II.

VOTF Statement of Principle: VOTF is motivated by the conviction that the Church should respect the dignity and intelligence of the laity, and acknowledge the right and responsibility of the laity to use their God-given gifts for the good of the Church.

Goal: Our goal is to work for active and meaningful engagement of the laity in the operations of the Church, always respecting its structures established by divine law.

Approach: We seek to achieve this goal through prayer, dialogue and education involving clergy and laity. Our approach is to work from the parish level upwards, both because it is necessary, and because it is possible. We recognize that it is on the level of the parish and in the context of parochial norms that our

children have been grievously injured. We believe that, if we can make our local faith communities models of consultation and openness, analogous changes will follow at higher levels (though slowly).

We believe that it is vitally important that the faithful of each parish actively and enthusiastically support the formation and actions of their Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) in order to move toward the vision of the Second Vatican Council, to empower the laity and to protect our children. Be it therefore resolved that VOTF will

1. Emphasize lay involvement at the parish level as crucial to the health of the church as a whole.
2. Work to enhance education at both the parish and diocesan level on the rights and responsibilities of the laity and clergy, and provide educational support and resources such as a primer on church structure.
3. Serve to provide help to the laity in fulfilling their vocation in the church.
4. Work to empower an active Parish Pastoral Council in every parish.
5. Support active PPCs by providing key themes for possible inclusion in PPC foundation documents, or providing a VOTF sample PPC foundation document*.
6. Recommend the creation of parallel Lay Councils on intermediate levels such as the vicariate and region, if a diocese is so divided, and if decisions affecting the laity are made at those levels.

There is nothing in the definition of parish level church structures that promotes secrecy and exclusion, but they are well entrenched in church culture and day-to-day operation. They are problems in the culture, not in the structure of the church. This fact does not make the changes that we seek easier, but more difficult, since changing hearts and minds can be more of a challenge than changing rules, even in the Church. We must continue to work for these changes, however, because the safety of our children and the good of the Church demand it.

Action Item for this next Pastoral Council Meeting

Discuss the viability of forming a local VOTF Parish Voice (a VOTF affiliate). We have the support and encouragement of Fr. Leary and the parish facilities are available to hold meetings. We do not have to limit participation to those of our parish and can open the involvement to Bristol-area concerned Catholics.

The most crucial part of this is for someone to take charge of the formation and leadership process. This does not mean coordinating the Parish Voice forever. It means leading the start-up initiatives, assessing interest, establishing the first meetings and eventual formation of structure and election of officers.

If you are interested, or can recommend a good leader to approach, please come forward at the next meeting.

Request from Deacon Bob

Deacon Bob is looking for volunteers to go through energy therapy training. 100 hospitals in the US use this for healing therapy. Bob would like to study and explore the results and show others how to do this effectively.

Please give the VOTF initiative your serious, prayerful consideration. See you at the meeting!

