

# STATEMENT OF IDENTITY

VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL, NATIONAL – MARCH 6, 2007

Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) arose in 2002 in response to shocking revelations in the life of the Catholic Church: widespread clerical abuse of children; silence of clergy in the face of known or suspected abuse; and the moral, governance and pastoral failures of Catholic bishops in response to abusers and survivors alike. In the face of such breaches of trust, VOTF emerged from the determination of Catholic laity to find their voice and to claim their proper role in the governance of the Church.

Drawing on their baptismal responsibility for the life and work of the Church, VOTF members commit themselves to supporting survivors; supporting priests who are helping to heal survivors and correct institutional flaws; and working to reform governing structures so that abuse of authority could not happen again. Nourished by its members' deep love for the Body of Christ, VOTF seeks full transparency and accountability in Church governance and full incorporation of lay Catholics in the life and work of the Church at every level.

The patterns that led to abuse and cover-up, and to increasing instances of clerical financial misconduct, still prevail. It is simply unreasonable to trust in exclusively clerical governance or to expect meaningful reform from the hierarchy acting alone on these issues.

Affirming their responsibility for the good of the Church, VOTF members continue to offer their experience of faith and their competencies in the Church. They willingly collaborate with bishops and clergy who welcome such relationships. They also pursue independent avenues to exercise their role of fully initiated lay faithful in the life and governance of the Church. In doing so, VOTF stands in full communion with the Church through sacrament, proclamation and service. It bases its work on the Gospel, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and on the rich sources of Catholic tradition, particularly the understanding of the Church articulated in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

VOTF welcomes the active participation of all Catholics who share a commitment to assisting survivors, supporting priests of integrity, protecting children, and working for full lay participation in Church governance. VOTF will continue to seek structural reforms that will correct the problems that led to the abuse scandal, and that, if unchanged, could enable other scandals to occur. Joining VOTF is a commitment to work to strengthen and renew the Church, and to assume shared responsibility for its governance.