

Bishops' official, reform leader meet

Tracy Early/CNS

NEW YORK — Kathleen L. McChesney, director of the U.S. bishops' Office for Child and Youth Protection, said in a New York appearance Feb. 20 that she thought bishops should allow Voice of the Faithful to meet in the churches of their dioceses.

A lay organization of people concerned about the church's sex-abuse scandal, Voice of the Faithful has been banned from meeting on church property in several dioceses by bishops who contend some of its members have goals contrary to church teaching.

McChesney said, however, that she had met with James E. Post, president of Voice of the Faithful, and they had agreed to continue their "working relationship and dialogue."

She made her comments during a question-answer period following a talk to a large audience gathered in the basement of St. Ignatius Loyola Church, a prominent Jesuit church on Manhattan's Park Avenue.

Bishops who have banned Voice of the Faithful include Bishops Thomas V. Daily of Brooklyn and William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre in New York, as well as Archbishop John J. Myers of Newark, N.J., and Bishop William E. Lori of Bridgeport, Conn.

In an Oct. 9 column for his archdiocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Advocate*, Archbishop Myers said Voice of the Faithful had offered itself "as an umbrella group for numerous causes that are divisive within the church and that encourage open disregard for our discipline and teaching."



Nancy Wiechec/CNS

Kathleen L. McChesney, director of the U.S. bishops' Office for Child and Youth Protection, stands outside her Washington office. In public comments, she said she thinks that bishops should allow Voice of the Faithful groups to meet in churches of their dioceses.

Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York has not banned Voice of the Faithful. In fact, Post spoke at St. Ignatius Loyola Church just a couple of weeks before McChesney was there, and a parish ad hoc committee dealing with the sex-abuse issue was planning to become a chapter of the organization.

McChesney told Catholic News Service following her presentation that Voice of the Faithful had the same goals as the bishops regarding sex-abuse victims and priests, and she would recommend letting the organization meet in diocesan facilities. "I don't see why not," she said.

She also said it would be "very good if all bishops established dia-

logue with Voice of the Faithful and found ways they could work together."

In her presentation, McChesney described the work of her office, including reports to be issued and her efforts to keep people informed via speaking engagements and press interviews.

McChesney also recounted some of the history of the bishops' attempts to overcome the sex-abuse scandal, including when abuse cases emerged in the 1980s in Louisiana and guidelines issued in 1990 that she said were "very good" but "not always followed."

She emphasized the importance of the lay role in overcoming the crisis, and urged her listeners to

"be interested and be involved."

She asked her audience to "keep the pressure on" and refuse to let the sex-abuse crisis be set aside as an old story of last year.

The National Review Board, a lay body established by the bishops, and the predominantly lay review boards in dioceses will play key roles, McChesney said.

One questioner suggested that letting bishops determine who would serve on the diocesan boards gave them too much discretion. But McChesney said she had met many of the board members and found "some incredibly independent, smart people who call things as they see them."

"We certainly don't want rubber-stamp boards," she said.

She also encouraged her listeners to become more actively involved in parish councils and in dialogue with their pastors and bishops.

Asked by some questioners how the bishops could be held accountable, McChesney noted that the national bishops' conference had no authority to remove a bishop.

But she said bishops likely would be influenced by the awareness that her office would be making a public report on any prelate who did not comply with the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" and the accompanying legal U.S. church norms approved by the Holy See.

Institutions need "accountability of leaders," and there will be "no more secrets" regarding the bishops' record of compliance with the charter and norms, she said.

Some questioners suggested that bishops should face criminal charges and go to jail if they protected priests who had committed crimes. McChesney, a former top FBI official, said that "it's a possibility," but would depend on the laws of the particular state.

SNAP grows; abuse costs revealed

Jerry Filteau/CNS

WASHINGTON — In the year since the sexual abuse of children by priests began making daily headlines, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests says its membership has grown 50 percent, from 3,000 to more than 4,500.

In January 2002, when the scandal began to break open in Boston, SNAP had nine active local chapters. In the past year it formed new support groups in 35 cities, bringing the total to 44 — nearly a fivefold increase.

SNAP said 90 percent of its members were victimized by Catholic clergy, religious or seminarians; about 10 percent were victims of

Protestant clergy.

The SNAP announcement in early February came amid other developments that indicate the fallout from the Catholic clergy sex-abuse scandal is still far from over.

Only a few dioceses so far have given a full public accounting of the costs of dealing with sexual abuse of minors by their priests. The Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo., joined their ranks in mid-February, reporting that as of the end of last year it has spent \$836,331 since the mid-1980s.

The diocese said it spent \$263,800 in claim settlements, \$17,176 for victims' counseling, \$198,829 for evaluation and therapy for accused priests and \$356,526 in legal ex-

penses. Insurance coverage reimbursed the diocese \$72,727 of the settlement expenses.

In New York, Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre wrote Feb. 12 that over the past 12 years the diocese has spent \$2.35 million from a special fund to cover settlements with victims and therapy for victims and priests.

In a letter published in the Feb. 20 edition of *The Catholic Herald*, Madison, Wis., diocesan newspaper, Bishop William F. Bullock said over the years the diocese has paid out \$1.6 million to 19 victims of abusive priests. He said \$900,000 of that was covered by insurers and the rest came from the diocese's self-insurance fund.

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