

## **JUSTICE AND RENEWAL IN THE CHURCH: A JOURNEY**

***Talk given at Chestnut Hill College, Chestnut Hill, PA on May 11, 2011***

### **(MY PERSONAL JOURNEY WITH VICTIMS OF CSA & ADVOCATING FOR STATUTE OF LIMITATION REFORM)**

I want to thank Sister Pauline McShain SHCJ for her very kind words and Bill Farnon as well. I appreciate your support and the support of the entire steering committee of the Greater Philadelphia VOTF, its membership and all of you here. I remember once saying to a member of our committee, I think it was Nancy Freedman, that I had gotten into this accidentally. She said that wasn't true, that it was providential.

And providential it was.

It you're not sure by now who I am, my name is Sister Maureen Turlish. I actually use "Maureen Paul Turlish which was the name I chose for my parents Mary and Paul when I received the habit, and although I went back to my baptismal name after Vatican II, I decided to use my "religious name" in memory of my father who was a Labor Union president in Philadelphia. He died of a heart attack negotiating a better contract and a better standard of living for the women and men who belong to the American Bakery and Confectionary Workers Union - AFL/CIO, Local 6.

I was in my first picket line at about age 9 or 10, Good & Plenty Candy was on strike, so I suppose one could say that advocacy and activism were in my genes long before I entered the convent.

I am a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. I was one of three women who were over 21 in August of 1960, who had worked in "the real world," gone to college or had done both. Altogether there were over forty of us. I received the habit in February of 1961 and made my first vows in May of 1963. At the end of my vow formula was added "and a special dedication to women and children."

So these are my years of celebration! I have already had two large community celebrations in Baltimore, Maryland and in Cincinnati, Ohio as the former Maryland Province has combined with the Ohio Province and we are now known as Ohio East. Little did I know 20 or even 15 years ago that I would be doing what I'm doing today.

I have taught in Catholic schools in Washington, D.C., Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware. In Pennsylvania I taught at both St. Bernadette in Drexel Hill and at St. Albert the Great in Huntingdon Valley. I have also chaired the Fine Arts departments at Archbishop Wood and Lansdale Catholic High Schools. I held the same position at St. Elizabeth High School in the Diocese of Wilmington.

I am a member of a number of advocacy groups and coalitions, among them the non-partisan, non-denominational Delaware Coalition, Child Victims Voice, and a founding member of the National Survivor Advocates Coalition. ([www.nsacoalition.org](http://www.nsacoalition.org))

I am the vice-president of the Delaware Association for Children of Alcoholics ([www.dacoa.org](http://www.dacoa.org)) and while it says "Alcoholics" it includes a broad spectrum of addictions. I am on a Voice of the Faithful national committee for Child Protection & Survivor Support and chaired a sub-committee which created an Advocacy Guide for Statute of Limitation Reform which is available on the national VOTF website.

## **I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU A BIT OF MY JOURNEY BY WAY OF PRELUDE:**

**Even though the Catholic Church has had a documented history of sexual abuse within its ranks from the earliest centuries of its existence, and was written about at the Council of Elvira, (Spain) in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, I like many, perhaps most Catholics in the 1980s, would read the occasional story that managed to make it into the newspapers during that time.**

**I would read the stories, reflect on what a terrible thing had been done, presume that the incident had been dealt with appropriately and say a prayer for the person victimized. The possibility of the intimidation or harassment of those who reached out to the institutional church for help never entered my mind.**

**That began to change in the 1990s. There was the suicide on August 11, 1992 of a Fr. William T. Reinecke of the Arlington Diocese whom our Washington sisters knew. I happened to be in Washington when that happened.**

**There were also the reports, studies actually, on the sexual abuse of women religious by priests in many countries, including countries in Africa, of women belonging mostly to local or diocesan religious communities but not entirely limited to them. It also happened to the European and American sisters there.**

**Authors of one 1990s report included a member of our own international leadership team.**

**When I left full time teaching to become Web Weaver and Intranet contact person for our province along with being the health liaison for our older sisters among other responsibilities, the flexibility of my schedule permitted me to read the daily papers online and I read them faithfully, again, this was before the existence of Bishop Accountability.org which now has become the data bank for documents and source materials having to do with the institutional Church's abuse of power and authority in the area of sexuality.**

**I also became a member of a team of sisters who journeyed around the country for the Propagation of the Faith, sometimes raising funds for our own missions and sometimes for those foreign missions supported by a particular diocese.**

**I have preached for the Propagation of the Faith in New York - in Long Island City as well as in Manhattan and Oyster Bay and in Pennsylvania. I have preached in other states including the Dioceses of Dubuque, Iowa, Lafayette, Louisiana and Pueblo, Colorado close to the Nevada border.**

**From 2000 on I began to pay serious attention to anything I read about the sexual abuse of children, particularly as it related to our Church. At that time I didn't think I knew anyone who had been sexually abused as a child, not in the classes I taught anyway. Neither, so I thought, did I know any child molesters.**

**That would change on both counts.**

When the accusations against Boston's John Geoghan began to surface in the New England papers, I was paying attention. My intuition told me that this Geoghan story, was just the tip of the iceberg, that this was going to implode, and I remember telling some of our older sisters that, "this thing is going to take us places we can't even begin to imagine at this point, things that we ordinary people know little about."

My advocacy and activism began in 2002, even before I attended my first demonstration in Philadelphia on April 26th of that year but that date was significant because of two things.

The occasion was the annual Mass and Black Tie fund raiser for the Catholic University of America. Philadelphia was the venue that year and all the cardinals who were called to the Vatican "woodshed" by Pope John Paul II, most returned to the States by way of Philadelphia to attend this affair.

There was a very small contingent of demonstrators, dressed causally but I was there in a suit with hand-outs. I wore lettered signs front and back reading, "Law and Egan need Relievin" on front and "Shame, Shame, Shame" in ever larger letters on back.

*"We are called to listen to the mourning of our fragmented world... of the sexually exploited, trafficked, marginalized and abused women and children...."*

Those words are taken from the CALLS TO ACTION of the 2008 General Chapter of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Responding to what is contained in the above words came together for me, as I said, early in 2002 when the extent of the childhood sexual abuse perpetrated in our Church and its subsequent cover-up over many decades became headline news in the United States.

Actually while the American cardinals were meeting with Pope John Paul II and later attending the black tie fund raiser for Catholic University, the national leadership of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur was meeting in Ipswich, Massachusetts from April 24<sup>th</sup> until April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

Their "Statement on Sexual Abuse within the American Catholic Church" contained this paragraph:

*"We object strongly to the secrecy and mismanagement that exacerbated this crisis. We believe that true healing will come only from a searching examination of the causes of this problem and from reform of those policies and structures that contribute to it."*

Like most Catholics, religious or lay, I had little idea of the suffering that was inflicted on children and their families by sexual predators of any stripe, I was not aware of the many predators who were enabled and protected by leaders of the very institution which professed to be following the gospel imperatives to protect the "Lord's little ones."

It was shocking, shameful and nauseating. It was beyond the pale. It was difficult to even get ones heart, mind and soul around the immensity of the violations of persons and the betrayal of the People of God represented by such violations. And it still is.

I was not a member of any Justice and Peace committee in 2002 because the Maryland Province did not have one but I knew in my heart that something was terribly wrong and I began to talk with

people, I attended meetings and discussion groups and asked questions of church authorities. I joined advocacy groups first in Philadelphia and Delaware and then nationally.

Advocacy, working for justice, quickly became a matter of conscience for me even if it didn't fall in any official ministerial category.

From the very first time I took a proactive stance in support of victims of childhood sexual abuse on April 26, 2002 I never looked back. I could not. Very quickly I began to see the suffering in the faces of those adult victims of childhood sexual abuse and I saw it in their parents' faces.

I looked into their faces and I looked into their eyes and I was looking into the face of a suffering Jesus and I could not turn away.

I recalled that 2002 event when I wrote my first article on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, *published in the National Catholic Reporter on October 28, 2005; it was titled, "The crisis of credibility in Philadelphia," and I posed this question,*

*"What happens now in Philadelphia given the archdiocese's disingenuous response to the grand jury report on clergy sexual abuse? I answered that question saying,*

*"Two things will happen.*

*First, even further alienation of the Catholic community as a result of the archdiocese's position.*

*Second, significant additional victims of clergy sexual abuse... will be empowered to come forward.*

*Because of the entrenched clericalism in the conservative Philadelphia archdiocese, it considered no alternative but to respond as it did in its 76-pagereport just as, historically, it considered no alternative to protecting an institution at the expense of its children.*

I remember that Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua was quoted on the same CNN Newsnight report on which I appeared the evening of April 26<sup>th</sup>. Cardinal Bevilacqua answered a reporter's question by saying,

*"We all are agreed that no priest guilty of even one act of sexual abuse of a minor will function in any ecclesial ministry or any capacity in our diocese."*

That statement was made not in February of 2011, nor in September of 2005, but in April of 2002.

In the National Catholic Reporter article I noted that,

*"Formal, documented warnings came to all the bishops in the United States as early as 1985, and in particular to Cardinal Bevilacqua. If the bishops chose not to address the issues up to that time, the Mouton-Doyle-Peterson Report, on the "The Problem of Sexual Molestation by Roman Catholic Clergy,"...spelled out exactly what would happen if they did not act responsibly."*

We are now all well aware, with the release of both grand jury reports, that the COLLUSION, CONSPIRACY AND COVER-UP involving the archdiocese has gone on for well over half a century.

And before ending I said,

*“Until church leaders admit to the pervasive hubris, personal and systemic, which allowed sexually abusive priests to continue in their perfidy long after their crimes were known by church authorities, it will be difficult if not impossible to reestablish either the institution’s credibility or their own. Absent that, reconciliation and healing will not happen.”*

*“Entrenched Clericalism” is the phrase I used to describe the “pervasive hubris, personal and systemic” that is, in fact, endemic to the institutional church, not just in the United States but worldwide.*

**CLERICALISM:**

*Clericalism has often been described as the pursuit of ecclesiastical power at the expense of the laity. It is viewed as an elite caste unaccountable to the People of God.*

It is this mindset peculiar to bishops and priests that renders otherwise ordinary men so insensitive to the moral depravity present in some of their fellows that they will go to any lengths to enable, protect and cover up for them even years after the fact and in the case of ordinary priests renders them incapable of challenging Church leadership in the face of such evil.

I believe it was in October of 2007 that I had occasion to tell one of my own sisters, SNDs, that, having talked with hundreds of victim/survivors of childhood sexual abuse, their parents or their survivors in the case of suicides and knowing what I now know, there is no way that I could stop doing what I’m doing. It is a matter of conscience, as well as justice.

No longer am I the person I use to be, even ten or twelve years ago, and although I cannot compare my loss with the loss suffered by victims of childhood sexual abuse, there is nevertheless, loss.

Something has been taken from me, as it has been taken from every member of the People of God. A part of me has died. It’s like a death in the family, something or someone that can never be restored or brought back.

I’m sure it’s only by the grace of God that individuals are able to hold onto their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ while separating it from the actions of men.

And who is to be held responsible for all those who have lost faith?

We know who and what caused this wretchedness. While institutional church leadership and the clerical culture that spawned this debacle are still in place, full responsibility, real accountability and transparency have not been forthcoming even though leadership would have us believe otherwise.

Actions, however, speak louder than words. “Do as I say not as I do,” will no longer suffice.

**AND WHAT ABOUT ALL OF US IN THIS ROOM?**

The journey for many of us began about ten years ago with the revelations of sexual abuse in Boston and its accompanying cover-up by the hierarchy there, both past and with the then Cardinal Bernard Law and his auxiliaries, some of whom remain in office today, including Bishops John McCormack and William Murphy.

**For others, the reality of what has been allowed to happen hit home in 2005 when the first grand jury report on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia was released. For some, the reality of what was revealed in 2005 didn't hit home until the continued cover-up was revealed with last month's release of a second grand jury report.**

**Some may have given the benefit of the doubt to the archdiocese in 2005, believing what was said or having been touched by the "Witness to the Sorrow" program that was held about a year after the first grand jury's report.**

**Many of us, however, were not so trusting.**

**One thing and one thing only was different after the release of the latest grand jury report and that was that criminal charges were leveled. That didn't happen in 2005 and it has made all the difference. There was no 76 page rebuttal from Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young with the recent grand jury report was there?**

**Then there is a final group in this room for whom this has already been a life's journey. I'm speaking of those who were sexually abused, raped or sodomized, molested, groomed and exploited in so many ways. I'm speaking of you who are now adults but who were then children, very young, very innocent children.**

**What happened to you should never have happened, but it did, and I am so sorry. In a very real sense, it happened IN GOD'S NAME. Why? Because in so many instances, we now know, that after that point when church officials became aware of what happened, enabling, facilitation and cover-up became the order of the day.**

**Victim/survivors of childhood sexual abuse -- by anyone -- and their families have been carrying the weight of this around for a lifetime. And as bad as that is we know that there are many more people who are suffering, all alone and without support. Again, in the larger scheme of things, the experts tell us that there are many times more victims of childhood sexual abuse -- by anyone -- doctors, teachers, rabbis, parents -- who have told no one and will never tell any one.**

**You should have been protected, but you weren't. You should have been safe in our Church but you weren't.**

**It should never have happened to you at anyone's hands - a parent, a sibling, a relative, a coach, doctor or teacher. It shouldn't have happened in any religious denomination. And it certainly should not have happened to you by anyone representing our Church whether that person was a bishop, priest, deacon, seminarian or nun and I am so sorry that leaders in our church failed to protect you, failed to remove the predators who harmed you. Not only did the institution's leadership not protect you but by leaving individuals in place, these same leaders put hundreds, thousands of others in harm's way.**

**It must be stressed that many of you would not have been abused by particular individuals had they, early on, been removed from ministry by those who had authority over them.**

**Before I go further, let me emphasize a few things.**

**The first is that childhood sexual abuse is not a Catholic problem any more than it is a Protestant, Jewish, Quaker or Islamic problem. It is not a problem peculiar to any organization, be it the Boy Scouts, Boys Town or the medical community as we have seen in the stories over the last year concerning doctors in Pennsylvania, Delaware and Connecticut.**

**Yes, childhood sexual abuse is an epidemic in this country. Actually it is a worldwide problem; it is a pandemic only it hasn't been so designated World Health Organization.**

**However, the incidence and widespread cover-up of childhood sexual abuse by church leaders over decades, is another issue entirely, and one that church leadership has yet to adequately address.**

**I am a Catholic sister. I have been involved in the education of children for over 35 years and I love my faith but I'm still waiting for church leadership to own up and take responsibility for their failures in protecting children.**

**Remember that reforming inadequate statutes regarding children is not anti-Catholic but it is anti-rapist, anti-sexual predator and anti-enabler.**

**In most instances and in most jurisdictions, childhood sexual abuse goes undetected and unreported. At best, it is under-detected and under-reported and by the time individual victims begin to realize the trauma they have suffered, statutes of limitation, both criminally and civilly, have usually expired.**

**Sexual abuse is the most horrific abuse of power and authority on the part of perpetrators and an unimaginable violation of the sacredness of the child. In many cases lives that held such promise early on descended into a hell of addictions, failed relationships and wrecked marriages.**

**The traumatic effect of sexual abuse on an individual's brain is not unlike that of a bullet to the head in many ways, or similar in its effects to what we know as post traumatic stress syndrome.**

**Any intense traumatic event, whether it is a visible shot or a less visible sexual attack on a child, it causes the brain to "rewire" itself, not always in ways that benefit the individual.**

**Attempts at yet another rewiring of the brain after such trauma, coupled with the effects of addictions, personality disorders and the like, is a journey of many, many years.**

**The institutional Roman Catholic Church's "problem" if one chooses to use that term, is a "problem" of conspiracy, collusion and cover-up. It is difficult to realize that the magnitude of this "problem" is such that the cover-up could be both so deeply embedded into the structures of the world's largest religious denomination and, at the same time, reach so high in its ecclesiastical governance.**

**Can we, should we depend on the Institutional Roman Catholic Church to Police Itself in this area?**

**Genetically, I don't think we as Catholics, are wired to process the level of corruption that has been revealed to us in these two grand jury reports.**

**In the back of our minds, as Catholics, we still cling to the hope that the hierarchy will have an “AH HAH” moment, when the light goes on and they actually comprehend the horrors that have been visited on hundreds, thousands of victims of childhood sexual abuse by those representing our church.**

**As I said previously, and it bears repeating: the fact that criminal charges were lodged and individuals were arrested was a deciding, if not the deciding factor in the archdiocese’s response to this grand jury report.**

**Should we, then, trust the leadership of the archdiocese based on what they are now saying? Honesty compels me to answer, No!**

**CONSIDER THIS: Would you be willing to let Bernie Madoff manage your investments or financial portfolio? Would you? How do you feel about Goldman-Sacks? I thought not. Then proceed logically and expect at the very least, the same levels of integrity, character, accountability and responsibility that you demand from your family doctor, surgeon, builder, law partner, board members or auto mechanic.**

**“Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.”**

**The truth is that we already know that leadership failed us for they failed to follow the mandate of Jesus when he said in Chapter 18 of the gospel of St. Matthew:**

**“Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith in me, he would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone tied round his neck.”**

**In matters of criminal behavior, the sexual abuse of a child, and the collusion and cover-up of the same, which are felonies in most jurisdictions, no religious denomination, no faith community, no sect and no cult should be exempted from the laws that are there for the welfare and protection of society as a whole.**

**Regardless of whether such institutions choose to disregard their own laws or standards, adequate laws that apply to such crimes should be in place for the protection of all and there should be sanctions when suspected crimes are committed and not reported to civil authorities.**

**In other words, there should be no accommodation in law that gives more protection to sexual predators who abuse children than it gives to the victims of that sexual abuse, and that should apply to those who would cover it up.**



## **ADDRESSING CHARGES OF ATTACKS ON THE CHURCH**

**Often accusations of “Catholic bashing,” phrases like, “the Church is no worse than anybody else,” or “it’s a homosexual problem,” or, as some cardinals abroad have said “it’s an American problem,” and then of course, closer to home there was Pennsylvania’s own former Republican Congressman, Rick Santorum, who claimed that the church’s pedophile problems should be no surprise since Boston is “a seat of academic, political and cultural liberalism in America.”**

**Such statements are excuses, not reasons, and they are irresponsible. The sexual abuse of a child, young woman, man or vulnerable adult is no more a homosexual problem than it is a heterosexual problem. It is about the abuse of power and authority, those who have it and those who do not.**

**Yes, unfortunately there always seems to be “Catholic bashers,” around, just as there always seems to be those who are “Anti-Semitic.” But this is one instance where church leadership has caused the crisis of credibility all by themselves even without the help of the “Know-Nothings” of over a century and half ago which was a claim made by some attacking the first Philadelphia Grand Jury Report in 2005. (29:48.08)**

**The recently released grand jury report (2011) is yet another excoriating indictment of the failure to protect children and it is as offensive to me today as it was when the first report was released by then District Attorney Lynne Abraham.**

**What is truly blasphemous and should be deeply offensive to all is that so many children could have been spared a lifetime of agony brought on by sexual abuse but for the callous behavior of enabling church officials who shuffled sexual predators around with abandon, instead of calling the police.**

**Why are the people in the parishes not demanding answers from their cardinal archbishop and why aren’t their pastors and priests demanding the same thing?**

**Why hasn’t the archdiocese released all the records and files that the grand jury members had access to during both investigations?**

**And most importantly, why isn’t the hierarchy actively supporting legislative reform that would remove all statutes of limitation in regard to the sexual abuse of children which would better protect all of Pennsylvania’s children?**

**Cardinal Justin Rigali heads the archdiocese and he is chairman of the Board of Governors of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, the public affairs arm of the Catholic bishops and dioceses of PA. Will he direct the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, to be pro-active in its support of the bills recently put forward in the House of Representatives by Louise Bishop and Michael Mc Geehan, House Bills 832 and 878?**

**Will he also direct pastors to voice support for these bills from their pulpits? Will the cardinal call for a postcard campaign demanding that Pennsylvania legislators pass better laws protecting all children and include the two year civil window that is contained in House Bill 878?**

**I am aware of no bishop or state Catholic Conference supporting proposed child abuse legislation, including the civil window, anywhere. Quite the contrary, such bills have been viciously opposed by both bishops and Catholic Conferences across the United States.**

**At a press conference on Tuesday, March 1 in the Capitol Rotunda House Bills 832 and 878 were introduced. These bills will abolish the statutes of limitation for both criminal and civil cases going forward and establish a two year civil “window” for previously time barred cases of childhood sexual abuse – by anyone.**

**At Representative Mc Geehan’s invitation, I spoke at the State Capitol in Harrisburg on Tuesday when those bills were introduced and I said:**

**All statutes of limitation, criminal and civil, should be removed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Not to do so is to discriminate against adults who have already suffered unconscionable violations at a very early age and who, in many cases, continue to suffer. House Bill 832 addresses this and House Bill 878 addresses the necessity of opening a two year civil window for those who are barred from making criminal complaints and who, through no fault of their own, have been denied justice simply because they were too young to appreciate the terrible violations being done to them.**

**Better criminal and civil statutes will be effective in helping to stop current childhood sexual abuse and preventing future abuse. A civil window is the single most effective means of holding sexual predators accountable for their crimes in the past along with any enablers, if they exist. It is especially needed because federal rulings prohibit the retroactive application of criminal charges which sexual predators may have escaped because of the collusion and conspiracy of others.**

**But let’s be clear about what opening a civil window of two years does and doesn’t mean. It simply means that victims will be able to access the justice system. The door to the courtroom has been opened, that’s all. Opening a civil window guarantees nothing but this initial access.**

**Moreover, the burden of proof in a civil suit rests with the plaintiff and not with the accused so the argument, often put forward, that it is hard for the accused to prove innocence is a specious one. If evidence can not be found or has been destroyed, such a case goes nowhere while in a criminal case the burden of proof rests with the Commonwealth, the District Attorney, whose decision it is whether or not to bring charges based on the evidence presented.**

**Having the right to access justice in a civil suit also means that records and files on the accused can be subpoenaed and alleged enablers or facilitators of childhood sexual abuse can be deposed. Such information is only found in discovery and discovery cannot take place, as I understand it, without the action of a criminal or civil suit. The only way the full extent of the cover-up of sexual abuse in our church will ever be known, short of voluntary actions on the part of the archdiocese, will be through the “discovery” phase of a criminal or civil suit or by a judge’s direct order.**

**In our society we say that children have rights but those rights have been denied to the majority of victim/survivors of childhood sexual abuse by anyone, because arbitrary statutes of limitation often give more protection to perpetrators than they do to actual victims. Most victims are forever denied having criminal charges leveled against their perpetrators. Are they to be denied this access civilly as well?**

**Delaware was successful in removing all civil statutes of limitation in 2007 with the passage of its Child Victims Act which included a two year civil window for bringing forward previously time barred cases of abuse – again, by anyone. That window closed in July 2009. Now, in the state of Delaware, there are no criminal or civil statutes of limitation going forward, on the sexual abuse of a child, period.**

**Whatever else may have been accomplished by the revelations that church leaders had covered up the incidence of childhood sexual abuse, those revelations have pointed out that in the majority of our states, laws covering the sexual abuse of children are arbitrary and inadequate. The same is true in regard to enabling individuals and organizations.**

**Delaware's success in unanimously passing that legislation, including the civil window, was aided by the support of many individuals and organizations, including religious groups, who signed on to the non-sectarian, non-partisan Delaware Child Victims Voice Coalition.**

**Has church leadership ever admitted their guilt (or their predecessor's guilt) in covering up for sexual predators? Not that I am aware of.**

**There are groups represented here that are composed of the faithful, the People of God, Voice of the Faithful and Call to Action among them.**

**They have been created in full compliance with Church Canon Law and yet the majority of bishops in the U.S. do not recognize Voice of the Faithful, refusing to dialog or communicate with them or accept articles or announcements of events for their diocesan newspapers or parish bulletins.**

**Is there still so much more to hide?**

**Keeping secrets has brought all of us all to this terribly dark place. Would it not be better if we all worked together toward the renewal and reform that is called for? Or is this truly a black hole with no discernable limits? I urge Cardinal Justin Rigali to accept the offer of help from these other members of the People of God, and work in cooperation with those individuals who are truly committed to church renewal and reform.**

**Charles McMahon will speak shortly to this issue in discussing the activities of the movement called the American Catholic Council. But in the meantime-**

**What should we be doing right now in response to this grand jury's investigation?**

**Make your voices heard in you parish and in the archdiocese. Accept nothing less than the accountability and transparency that was mandated in 2002 but which has been short on delivery for almost ten years. Recommend that your pastors speak directly to this subject in their homilies –**

**Reach out to all victims of childhood sexual abuse. Remember and pray for them in the intentions at Mass--**

**Support House Bills 832 and 878 -- Have announcements to that effect placed in your parish bulletins and on your parish website. Do not accept "No" for an answer. Such announcements should be on the archdiocesan website as well -**

**Call your own state representatives and ask them to support these bills -**

**Write, e-mail, phone or fax members of the PA House Judiciary Committee and ask them to convene a public hearing and vote in favor of these two bills -**

**Organize small groups of your friends and do whatever your group is able to do. If it is to make five calls to friends asking them to call or e-mail five others and keep the chain going, that's great. Later on, send e-mails to your own legislators and send copies to others.**

**Call your friends, family, acquaintances and ask them to call their representatives as well as the members of the House Judiciary committee—**

**Plan to ride the bus to Harrisburg when the time comes--**

**Read the Advocacy Guide for Statute of Limitation Reform which can be found on the national VOTF website -**

**<http://voices.votf.org/cpss/files/2010/09/SOL-Adv-Guide-full-doc.pdf>**

**And finally, visit the Delaware's Child Victims Voice website – at [www.childvictimsvoice.com](http://www.childvictimsvoice.com) - it is still an active site and it has templates for writing to legislators and newspapers along with a variety of helpful information. Other states including Maryland and New York have modeled their coalition websites on the Delaware site. Perhaps Pennsylvania can do the same.**

**On Wednesday, March 9, PA state representatives Louise Bishop and Mike McGeehan “called on the House Judiciary Committee to convene a public hearing and vote on their two bills to abolish the statute of limitations in child sexual abuse cases and to suspend the statute of limitations for adult victims of childhood sex abuse” so that they may access the justice that has been denied them.**

**I urge all of you here today to take this opportunity to stand up for children by supporting House Bills 832 and 878.**

**We owe it to our children, all of them.**

**Thank you and God bless you.**

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