

*News from: Voice of the Faithful of Greater Philadelphia*

September 27, 2006

CARDINAL URGED TO EXPAND 'WITNESS TO SORROW' EVENT

A local Catholic activist organization has called upon Cardinal Justin Rigali to expand his program of listening to survivors of clergy sexual abuse by taking it to parishes throughout the Philadelphia archdiocese.

In a letter to the Cardinal, Voice of the Faithful of Greater Philadelphia said the Sept. 15 "Witness to the Sorrow" event at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, during which priests from the archdiocese heard testimony from sexual abuse victims, was "a step in the right direction by the archdiocese in raising awareness of the wounds, not only of sexual abuse victims, but of the entire Catholic community."

"The basic idea of having people listen at first hand to survivors' stories and then take their experience into prayer is a very positive one," the letter said. "In addition to bishops and priests, many more of the faithful would benefit greatly from having the same experience."

The organization urged the Cardinal to "actively encourage" priests in the archdiocese to invite survivors to speak in their parishes and recommended that such programs "be followed up with prayer services to seek God's guidance on what parishioners can do in response."

The VOTF/GP letter also urged the Cardinal to invite survivors to write their stories for publication in the Catholic Standard & Times, the archdiocesan newspaper; to support legislative changes currently before the Pennsylvania General Assembly that would extend the statute of limitations for crimes of sexual abuse and create a one-year "window of opportunity" for survivors to bring civil actions against their abusers, and to sell the Cardinal's mansion on City Avenue, using the proceeds to benefit survivors.

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