

**April 29, 2002**

*This letter was sent to the person in Boston, who was involved with organizing Voice of the Faithful. When I had called together our first gathering, I had not been aware of this organization. It was amazing to read what they wanted and how my feelings were much in the same place.*

May Day! May Day! My husband and I have called a gathering at our home this May Day. The purpose of our time together is to create community, invite prayer, voice our pain, sit in discernment, and move towards action. I have invited a man who has been very involved in the Center for Peace and non-violent action. Hopefully, the action we all move towards comes from a place of great Spirit and peace, not just out of frustration and anger. We need to find a new way to engage and not give up or give in.

A few Sundays ago at our church gathering, I voiced my pain with what is happening in my universal Catholic Church. For me the pain is not just in what individual priests have done, it is what the environment of our Church has created and accepted. In that environment, those in power have justified the thinking that a priest who has been known to sexually abuse young children can continue celebrating the Eucharist. Yet, when a woman in our small parish wished to become a Catholic and took all the RCIA courses, she was not allowed to complete her admittance to the Church at Easter Vigil because her annulment papers were not completed. She is not allowed to officially come to the table of Christ.

My pain lies in the fact that a priest preached a few Sundays ago that we, the laity, should again experience the Sacrament of Confession. Yet the hierarchy of our Church has told parents of children who were abused to keep quiet in order to receive a financial settlement.

I am a woman who is called to the priesthood, who believes that the rules of celibacy should be changed, and who is having great difficulty with many things in our organization. However, my energy is not on these issues. I feel being called to help organize those faithful who wish to continue their Catholic experience and who feel that call of "reclaiming" our Church. "We are the Church," It seems as though we have justified our inaction.

Terry, I was thrilled to hear about your group. I will mention it at our meeting and I hope we will be in community with you. The Spirit is moving among us. I have hope that together something can be changed. Dialogue is the most precious commodity at this moment.

Peace and courage be with you.  
Diana Flahive