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The church's everyday heroes

Suzanne Morse | Jul. 23, 2010 NCR Today

Last week, one of Voice of the Faithful's regional leaders, John Hynes, passed away suddenly. John was the chair of the movement's Boston Area Council when the Boston archdiocese decided to close dozens of parishes in a painful process that still impacts the archdiocese today, six years later.

Voice of the Faithful's national office and the Boston Area Council put together a series of meetings -- Parish Preservation Summits -- in the summer of 2004 that ultimately culminated in the Mass on the Boston Common, the first lay-led Mass to be celebrated on that historic site. Additionally, it was in those meetings that the idea of the parish vigils took root and took hold.

The individual parishes, and the communities of lay leaders that formed within them, were ultimately responsible for creating the vigil movement that continues today. Several parishes in the Boston area still have active vigils, and inspired similar actions in other parts of the country. (*NCR* published a comprehensive account of these events [1] in 2005).

There are thousands of lay Catholics across the country -- and around the world -- who continue to take responsibility for their faith and their church in ways large and small, even in these times of crisis. Some do their work in parishes; others in lay-led movements; some continue to speak out for justice for survivors of clergy sexual abuse, even in the face of opposition; others work for social justice, both inside and outside the church. Most do so out of the spotlight. John was one of those people. There are many more. They are the hope for the church.

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[1] http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2005c/082605/082605a.php