



## Fr. Joseph Fowler Receives Priest of Integrity Award

### REVEREND JOSEPH M. FOWLER

#### Priest of Integrity 2009 – Voice of the Faithful

Reverend Joseph M. Fowler was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, in 1961. Fr. Fowler has served with dedication as a pastor, a teacher and a creative organizer. For example, working with his brother, Wayne, he founded Hand in Hand Ministries ([www.hhministries.com](http://www.hhministries.com)) which serves impoverished peoples in Eastern Kentucky, Nicaragua, Belize and Costa Rica. He is the president of the organization. In 2005, Hand in Hand Ministries facilitated a week-long healing journey to Managua, Nicaragua, for a group of survivors of sexual abuse by clergy.

Over the years, Fr. Fowler has tirelessly worked to make things better for those in need. He has spoken out against injustice and dishonesty in our Church and society. Several years ago he publicly urged that a fellow-priest, who has more than forty confirmed minor victims of sexual abuse, be denied parole from prison so that he could never again harm a child. The man remains in prison and is reported to be helpful to fellow inmates.

In April, 2008, at the signing into law of HB211, Fr. Fowler read the following statement to the media in the Capitol Rotunda of Kentucky in the presence of the Governor and legislators:

"Today I am witness to an extraordinary event, the signing by my Governor of legislation to protect our children from sexual predators. Perhaps no institution has desecrated its sacred trust of our youth more than the Catholic Church in America during the past 70 years. In Kentucky alone, the Catholic Church has paid out more than 126 million dollars since 2002 to victims of sexual abuse by priests and church lay men and women charged with protecting the innocence of children. These people misused their authority in ways that left psychological scars that, in many cases, can never be healed. As a priest I want to offer my hand to all victims and to let them know that I abhor the sin that has been done to them. If I can aid their healing in any way, I stand ready to try.

"I also want to compliment many of these victims and others angered by what was done to them, who have channeled their hurt and rage to initiate the legislation being signed into law today. The Voice of the Faithful organization, in particular, deserves special recognition for the shaping of this new law. It was not

the Catholic hierarchy, nor the clergy nor any other civic or faith group that launched the effort to write and lobby for HB211. No, the effort came from a group of lay men and women who understood that neither their Church nor their State was doing enough to curb the sexual exploitation of our children. I compliment this extraordinary group of men and women on their success today. This small band of dedicated souls led the bishops of the Catholic Church, the leaders of other churches, the Kentucky Youth Advocates, the Family Foundation and others to gather 44 House cosponsors to pass this bill unanimously in the General Assembly.

"Let their efforts be a witness to others who think it is fruitless to try to change society. With passion, organization and lots of work, we can, and must, do even more to protect the innocence of our children in a society that often fails to respect the sacredness of every human life.

"Thank you, Voice of the Faithful members."

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(Brief summary of HB 211: Kentucky HB211 made virtually all sexual abuse of minors a felony. In Kentucky there is no Statute of Limitations on any felony. The law increased the penalties for sexual abuse of minors, raised the age of vulnerable minors to 16; to age 18 if abused by coaches, clergy or teachers, and strengthened the penalty for not reporting.)



