

Voice of the Faithful to discuss needs of Diocese of Bridgeport

Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport will continue its reflection on the election of bishops at its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, February 2nd at 7:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk. In accordance with a proposal of the Canon Law Society of America the focus of discussion will be the needs of the diocese. The person chosen as bishop ought to be capable of addressing those needs. Everyone is invited to attend.

Dr. Constance Lawrence of the Christian Counseling Center will give a short overview of the organization's work in providing counseling support for those in need, including survivors of sexual abuse. The Center (<http://christiancounselingcenter.us/>) co-founded by Dr. Lawrence and the late Rev. Henry Yordon received a \$2500 VOTF Voice of Compassion award in 2005 for its service to the community. \$35,800 has been awarded by VOTF from its Voice of Compassion Fund since its 2003 inception to Fairfield County human service agencies.

A representative of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, www.snapct.org will also make a brief presentation.

The election of bishops by the clergy and people of the diocese is the first of five proposals for structural change in the Catholic Church presented by VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The other proposals are: (2) the right of parishioners to participate with the bishop in the selection of their pastors; (3) the establishment of elected, representative diocesan pastoral and finance councils with real authority; (4) the establishment of elected, representative parish pastoral and finance councils with real authority; and (5) the right of the faithful as members of a parish corporation consisting of their elected representatives, the bishop, and the pastor, to own church property. The full text of the proposals can be consulted at www.votfbpt.org/proposal.html.

The stated mission of Voice of the Faithful, an organization of mainstream Catholics, is to be "a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church." These proposals are intended to stimulate conversation concerning the role of the laity in the governance of the Church. A reasoned dialogue among bishop, priests, nuns, and laymen and women will contribute to the renewal of the Church.

VOTF is seeking contributions to its 2006 Voice of Compassion Fund for direct support of area human service charities at: VOTF, PMB #171, 1127 High Ridge Road. Stamford, CT 06905-1203. For further information about VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport, the Voice of Compassion Fund and for directions to the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk please consult www.votfbpt.org.