

PRESS RELEASE

NOTED ATTORNEY TOM GALLAGHER TO SPEAK TO VOTF ON OWNERSHIP OF CHURCH PROPERTY

Tom Gallagher, a noted attorney from Greenwich, will discuss the ownership of church property at the regular monthly meeting of Voice of the Faithful on Thursday, September 6, at 7:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk. Everyone is invited to attend.

In various newspaper articles Mr. Gallagher has argued that current state law concerning parish corporations (the Religious Corporation Act) ought to be changed to give parishioners a real say in the governance of their communities. Such a change would make the bishop, the pastor, and the parishioners co-responsible for the parish.

A native of Syracuse and a graduate of Catholic University and Catholic University Law School, Mr. Gallagher worked for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and then went into practice on Wall Street. He is currently developing "Wake Up!" a media company offering short audio messages concerning wellness, inspiration, and prayer.

During the coming year members of VOTF will study the issue of ownership and will co-sponsor, with the Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J., Chair of Catholic Studies at Fairfield University, a conference entitled "Who Owns Our Church?" on Saturday April 26, 2008.

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." VOTF believes that a reasoned dialogue among bishop, priests, nuns, and laymen and women will contribute to the renewal of the Church.

In order to encourage greater lay participation in the governance of the Church, VOTF developed five proposals for structural change: (1) the election of bishops by the clergy and people of the diocese; (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.

For further information about VOTF in the Diocese of Bridgeport and for directions to the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk consult www.votfbpt.org.