PRESS RELEASE

DISTINGUISHED THEOLOGIAN PAUL LAKELAND TO DISCUSS FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the light of recent news reports of financial improprieties in St. John Parish, Darien, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport plans to turn its attention during the coming year to the issue of financial accountability in the Catholic Church.

Dr. Paul Lakeland of Fairfield University will speak about financial accountability in Canon Law and the practical implications for both the diocese and the parishes at VOTF's regular monthly meeting on Thursday, September 7, at 7:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church on the Green in Norwalk. Everyone is invited to attend.

Professor Lakeland holds The Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J., Chair in Catholic Studies at Fairfield. The purpose of the Chair is to examine the Catholic intellectual tradition through programs open to the public and to the University community. His groundbreaking book, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, received the Catholic Press Award in 2004 for the best book in theology. He explores the idea of the laity in past history and the rise of the laity to a more prominent role in the Church. The laity can do much to renew the Church buffeted by the scandal of priestly sexual abuse and financial misconduct. He is working on a new book, *Being Adult, Being Catholic: The Lay Vocation in the Catholic Church.*

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.