

James Joyce and Church Reform

Thursday, April 14th

7:30 p.m.

First Congregational Church on the Green
Norwalk

James Joyce has become one of Ireland's most beloved writers, famous because he both celebrated and criticized the Irish culture that he knew so well. At the center of Joyce's critique is his rejection of the Catholic Church. Like many Irish, Joyce was raised in a Catholic family, was active in the Church as a child and young man, and was educated in Catholic schools. However, as he documents in his autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce attempted to "fly by the... nets" of "nationality, language, religion" to find a more liberating life as an artist outside of Ireland. Whether Joyce lost complete faith in God, had merely rejected the institutional church, or transformed his spirituality into something else entirely is a source of debate. What is clear is that Joyce used his *Portrait* as a way of documenting and diagnosing the ills of the institutional Catholic Church in Ireland in the early twentieth century. Indeed, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in its detailed portrayal of a boy's formation within the church, strikingly anticipates the reforms of the second Vatican Council half a century later.

Dr. Mottolese's talk will look at ways that Joyce anticipated the reforms of Vatican II through his diagnostic fiction and attempt to situate Joyce's own relationship to faith and religion.

William Mottolese, Ph.D.
Guest Speaker



William Mottolese has taught at Fordham University and Saint Joseph's College in Indiana and is presently Chair of the English Department at Sacred Heart Greenwich.

He has published on such subjects as Olaudah Equiano, Laurence Sterne, and James Joyce and is presently at work on projects on Joyce, teaching critical thinking, and the relation of literary modernism to twentieth-century popular music. He also teaches on the faculty of the Center for Fiction in Manhattan, where he leads classes on James Joyce, David Foster Wallace, Irish literature, and postcolonial literature. William is an award-winning teacher, published poet, and proud father of three children who love to read and write.