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NEWS RELEASE

CATHOLICS AFTER THE CRISIS: THE CHOICES WE CONFRONT FORMER NYT RELIGION CORRESPONDENT ADDRESSES SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

DAYTON, Ohio — *The New York Times* former senior religion correspondent Peter Steinfels vividly remembers the first case of sexual abuse in the Catholic church that he encountered as a journalist in the late 1980s.

"It was 'he said-he said' and I thought, 'How do we report this? What is fair?'" Steinfels said. "It was very difficult to figure out what the reality was."

Almost two decades later the subject continues to challenge Steinfels, a visiting professor at the University of Dayton. Steinfels will offer his perspective as "The Wounded Body of Christ: Sexual Abuse in the Church" series wraps up at the University. Steinfels will discuss "Catholics After the Crisis: The Choices We Confront" at **7 p.m. Monday, April 18, in the Kennedy Union ballroom** on UD's campus. The presentation is free and open to the public.

"One of the things I'd like to do is explain what the sex abuse crisis has taught me as a correspondent," Steinfels said. "But I also want to talk about some of the choices we have to make as Catholics."

According to Steinfels, there are both theological and institutional choices to consider. And some degree of self-examination — not only the examination of others' failures — is necessary. That is why he has been reflecting on his own experience as a religion reporter.

"So much of what we know about the incidents is known because of litigation," Steinfels said. "It has brought to light important and previously undisclosed facts, but it also makes it difficult to figure out where the whole truth lies."

In 1997, Steinfels left his position at *The New York Times* to embark on a search for

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larger and more fundamental truths about the state of American Catholicism, not only about the sex abuse cases he had covered. That search culminated in his book, "A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America," published in 2003.

"Because I have written extensively on both the immediate scandal and the larger context of Catholic life, I sometimes see complexities that aren't a part of the general consciousness," Steinfels said. "Wearing both hats, as a writer and a Catholic, often produced a good deal of anguish, but in both roles you ultimately have to try to serve the truth."

"The Wounded Body of Christ: Sexual Abuse in the Church" lecture series was designed to provide people with the resources to respond to the crisis of sexual abuse by the clergy.

The series is sponsored by the University of Dayton office of the president, department of religious studies and campus ministry.

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For media interviews, contact **Peter Steinfels** at (937) 229-4321.