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NEWS RELEASE

A MAGNA CARTA IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: CONFERENCE EXPLORES LEGACY AND CHALLENGES OF VATICAN II

DAYTON, Ohio — Pope John Paul II has called it the “magna carta of human dignity.” With “The Church in the Modern World,” the sweeping, final document of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic church read the signs of the times and embraced the needs of the human family.

Twelve speakers from three continents will explore the continuing impact of this landmark teaching at “Church and World: The Legacy and Challenges of Vatican II” at the University of Dayton Sept. 25-27.

Conference participants will re-examine the major themes of the groundbreaking 1965 pastoral constitution (*Gaudium et Spes* in Latin) that focused attention on global change, social justice, war, poverty and the growing interdependence of humankind.

Author Richard Rodriguez opens the conference with a keynote speech, “The Brown Face of God and the Second Vatican Council,” at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 25, in Kennedy Union on campus. His lecture is free and open to the public. An essayist, journalist and social critic, Rodriguez is a Pacific News Service editor and contributor to the “PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer.” He has written a trilogy of books that explore social themes: *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*; *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* and *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*.

“I cheered for the liberal bishops and cardinals at that great convocation,” Rodriguez wrote of Vatican II in *Hunger of Memory*. Although Rodriguez disliked the liturgical reforms the council instituted, he wrote, “I welcomed the Church’s attempts at reconciliation with other religions. I approved of the liberal encyclicals concerning ‘the Church in the modern world.’ But

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I was changing rather more quickly than the Council fathers were changing the Church. I was already a 'new Catholic.'"

The conference includes two other plenary sessions:

- * Christine Firer Hinze — "*Gaudium et Spes: Remnant of the '60s or Foundation for Critical Solidarity in our Suffering World?*" 3:30 p.m., Friday, Sept. 26. An associate professor of Christian ethics at Marquette University, Hinze is the author of *Comprehending Power in Christian Social Ethics*.
- * Felix Wilfred — "*Asian Christianity between Prophecy and Integration: Gaudium et Spes for a New Millennium,*" 9 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 27. Wilfred is chair and professor of Christian studies at the University of Madras, India, and author of *On the Banks of Ganges*.

In addition, the conference features eight workshops that focus on the challenges of Vatican II for the contemporary church. From "The Spirituality of Starbucks and the Swoosh: Corporate Branding in the Light of *Gaudium et Spes*" to "Creation of Community: Food and Faith following Catholic Social Teaching," workshops deal with economic and social justice, community development, the Hispanic community and the global church.

Speakers range from a longtime Catholic Worker movement family, to the director of the Catholic Centre for Justice Development and Peace in Lusaka, Zambia, to the president of the Mexican American Culture Center in San Antonio, Texas.

"The Church in the Modern World" marks a milestone in the Catholic view of how the Church sees itself in society," said the Rev. John McGrath, S.M., an assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton and conference organizer. "We've hardly begun to recognize the richness of its insights and how much direction it gives for Catholic life in 2003.

"There isn't a Catholic who wouldn't profit from hearing these speakers and discussing these issues. Every one of the speakers has been heavily involved for years in trying to make the teachings of *Gaudium et Spes* an accepted reality in the Catholic communities where they live."

The conference is free to faculty, staff and students from participating universities — the University of Dayton, John Carroll University, Xavier University and the University of Notre Dame — and \$50 for the general public. The registration fee includes admission to the plenary speeches and two workshops, a box lunch and a T-shirt.

For more information or to register, see <http://churchworld.udayton.edu/>

For media interviews, call **Father John McGrath, S.M.**, at (937) 229-4487.