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University of Dayton

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SERIES OF CELEBRATIONS IN APRIL WILL HONOR FITZ'S PRESIDENCY

DAYTON, Ohio — The University of Dayton has planned three events in April to celebrate the presidency of Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., and his commitment to faith, community and service.

The youngest person to ever serve as president is also the longest serving in UD’s 152-year history. Fitz steps down as president on June 30 after a record 23-year run.

The celebration starts with prayer. A Mass of Thanksgiving is slated for 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 7, at Holy Angels Church, 218 K St. Marianists, the campus community, alumni and the Fitz family are invited.

Faculty, staff and students will bid farewell to UD’s popular president during a “porch party” at 3:45 p.m. on Friday, April 12, in the Thomas J. Frericks Center. A “parade” of departments, divisions and student groups will pay both serious and lighthearted homage to Fitz, who will enjoy the festivities from a specially designed porch. At UD, porches are symbolic of the Marianist sense of community.

The Dayton community will honor Fitz at a 6 p.m. “Celebration of Community” tribute dinner on Wednesday, April 24, in the Thomas J. Frericks Center. Ronald Heifetz, director of Harvard University’s Leadership Education Project, author of Leadership Without Easy Answers and one of Fitz’s champions, will offer remarks, and community leaders will present $1 million to Fitz to help endow UD’s new Center for Leadership in Community and name it after him.

Fitz will return to campus in January to work in the center and teach courses.

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Seating is limited at the $100-a-plate dinner. For reservations, call 229-2902 by April 10. About 100 students, neighborhood leaders and Marianists are attending the dinner, courtesy of corporate donations. Those wishing to make a contribution to the endowment in recognition of Fitz’s leadership may call Fran Evans, vice president for advancement, or Joanie Swedlund, director of special programs, at (937) 229-2912.

“I don’t know anyone in my 30 years here who has provided more moral leadership in this community than Brother Ray,” said Brad Tillson, publisher of the Dayton Daily News and chair of a 15-person committee that raised the money. “Brother Ray tends to lead first by example, then with quiet strength. He has been at the table dealing with this community’s toughest issues — race relations, the protection of children and families, health and human services issues, economic development issues. There’s hardly an area where he’s not been involved.”

Ohio Senate President Richard Finan, chair of UD’s board of trustees and a member of the steering committee, said the event is not a farewell dinner. “This is as much for the community as it is for Brother Ray. The community deserves the opportunity to give a proper thank-you. It’s a thank-you not just for service, but for service that has gone above and beyond the call of duty, in my opinion. Under Brother Ray’s leadership, we’ve blossomed, we’ve expanded, we’ve nurtured our roots. He will be turning over the reins of an institution that’s in outstanding condition, financially, academically and spiritually.”

Daniel J. Curran, executive vice president and vice president for academic affairs at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, becomes UD’s 18th president on July 1.