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# Lifetime Humanitarian

University of Dayton

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# NEWS



SELECT LANGUAGE

*Tuesday February 24, 2015*

## Lifetime Humanitarian

A top Vatican official heading the group tasked with reforming the Vatican bureaucracy who also leads one of the world's top humanitarian organizations will accept a human rights award from the University.

The University will honor Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga of Honduras with the Archbishop Oscar Romero Human Rights Award at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, in the Kennedy Union

ballroom. The presentation is free and open to the public.

Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga is the president of Caritas Internationalis, a Vatican-based umbrella organization for 160 charity organizations working on six continents. In 2013, Pope Francis appointed him coordinator of the Council of Cardinals for the Study of the Organizational and Economic Problems of the Holy See. He also has served as the Vatican's spokesperson to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on the issue of Third World debt.

"Thank you to the University of Dayton for this great honor," Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga said. "Oscar Romero is the one person who has inspired the work of Caritas the most. He was an inspiration to the poor throughout the world. His teachings are so rich that you can always find new insights that support our work on social justice."

The University created the Oscar Romero Human Rights Award in 2000 to honor the ministry and martyrdom of the Salvadoran archbishop. Romero was slain 35 years ago while officiating Mass because of his vocal defense of the human rights of the poor and disenfranchised. The award is presented to an individual or organization that has earned distinction for the promotion of the dignity of all human beings and alleviation of the suffering of the human community.

Pope Francis officially designated Romero a martyr earlier this month. Beatification of Romero, the last step before sainthood, is expected later this year.

"We are honoring Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga for his lifetime of human rights advocacy, and especially the way he continues to challenge leaders of prosperous nations to increase aid to poor countries," said Mark Ensalaco, director of human rights research in the University of Dayton Human Rights Center and creator of the award. "Both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis hold Caritas Internationalis' work in high regard for its ability to respond to the needs of the poor. Pope Francis has called it 'an essential part of the Church.'"

Al Staggs will perform "Romero: A Martyr's Homily" at 7 p.m. Monday, March 9, in Sears Recital Hall. It's free and open to the public. Staggs presents one-person performances and lectures for churches, colleges, seminaries and conferences throughout the world. His performances and lectures are for spiritual formation, theological lectureships, theologian-in-residencies, chapels, retreats, theology and arts events and peace and justice conferences.

Past recipients of the University's Archbishop Romero Award include: Juan Méndez, former director of America's Watch and president of the International Center for Transitional Justice and United Nations special representative on the prevention of genocide; Casa Alianza, which operates programs to help homeless and abandoned children in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua; Radhika

Coomaraswamy, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women; Juan Guzman, the Chilean judge who prosecuted the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet; Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Doctors Without Borders; and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services.

The University of Dayton is one of the country's top 10 Catholic universities and home to the nation's first undergraduate program in human rights.

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