On Air: The Vatican

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A Vatican radio host who has written a book with Mother Teresa and served four popes will visit the University of Dayton this month to receive an award for communicating the gospel.

Sean-Patrick Lovett, director of Vatican Radio English Section and professor of communication at Pontifical Gregorian University will receive the Daniel J. Kane Religious Communications Award from the University of Dayton's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives for outstanding lifetime dedication to Gospel values using mass media.

Lovett will speak at 5:15 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 31, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom, as part of the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation annual conference. His talk will be recorded and posted online Friday, Feb. 1, at http://vcc.udayton.edu.

"The Church is communication — because it is the 'Word.' And the 'Word' is alive, dynamic and interactive by nature. So the Church will continue to use everything available to ensure it remains true to that nature," Lovett said.

"My own experience at Vatican Radio over the past 35 years has taken me from recording programs on magnetic tapes to uploading blogs on smartphone apps, from shortwave broadcasts to Internet podcasts. The 'who,' 'what,' 'when,' 'where' and 'why' of Church communication hasn't changed much in 2,000 years — nor is it likely to. The 'how' is changing even as we speak, so it's just as well we're adaptable."

Lovett describes himself as Irish by blood, African by birth and Italian by adoption. He received his education at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and the National Academy in Rome. He has a Doctorate in Communications "Honoris Causa" from the American University of Rome.

He began working at Vatican Radio under Pope Paul VI in 1977 and later served as a war correspondent in the 1980s in Lebanon, South Africa and Northern Ireland. He followed Pope John Paul II on many of his international pilgrimages for 26 years as a Vatican reporter.

In addition to his appointment at Pontifical Gregorian University, Lovett is vice president of the Centre de Recherché en Communication, in Lyon, France, coordinating media and communications workshops in Africa. He worked with Mother Teresa to write The Best Gift is Love, a bestselling book of Mother Teresa's meditations. He has done voice-overs for dozens of films, cartoons and documentaries.

For the last seven years, he has met with the University of Dayton's Chaminade Scholars on the annual art, culture and
spirituality immersion pilgrimage to Rome.

"The Chaminade scholars are special because they are fully aware of the precious opportunities the program offers," Lovett said. "They are hungry: not just for knowledge, but for the understanding that comes through lived experience. And if it's understanding and experience you're after, believe me, there's no place like Rome."

The award is named for Daniel J. Kane, the former communication director for the archdiocese of Cincinnati. In the 20-year history of the award, recipients have included film producers, the Archbishop of Cincinnati and the press coordinator for the Vatican.

The University's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation is an online program open to anyone, offering adult religious education and faith formation training. It serves Catholics eager to grow in their faith and those serving in pastoral leadership roles in the Church. The VLCFF has more than 60 diocese partners in the U.S. It reaches into 182 Catholic dioceses and more than 40 countries, Zukowski said.

The VLCFF offers more than 85 online courses in more than 500 sections per year on topics such as Catholic doctrine, church history, communication, ecclesiology, liturgy, sacraments, prayer, Marianist studies, morality, scripture, social justice and world religions. The program also offers certificates in five areas: catechesis, adult faith formation, lay ecclesial ministry, digital catechesis and media education. The VLCFF enrolled more than 5,000 students in 2012.

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