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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Leadership in Faith Formation

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A University of Dayton director has received national recognition for her leadership in providing religious education to Catholics around the world.

Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., a religious studies professor and director of the University's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives, will receive the 2012 Catechetical Award May 9 from the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL).

The NCCL selected Zukowski for her innovative, Internet-based learning initiatives in the areas of adult faith formation and catechesis. The Catechetical Award is the highest award given by NCCL.

Accepting the award, Zukowski said the challenge for catechesis in the 21st century is to broaden perspective on both new methods and the concept of discipleship in a digital era.

"The new era of communications is exploding around us in nanosecond speed, and we cannot ignore it," she said. "Our children, the future of the church, are grounded in the reality and impact of easy, fast and immediate access to information and experiences that tweak their imagination — even their religious imagination.

"This new era is too complex to think that anyone can do this alone. We need to work together to awaken, reinvigorate, inspire and animate a more profound in-depth experience of faith today."

The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation is among Zukowski's most significant contributions to the church in the digital age. Launched in 2000 by the University's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives, the VLCFF is an online religious education program open to the public, offering about 80 courses on topics such as doctrine, church history, sacraments, prayer, the Bible and social justice. It reaches into 182 Catholic dioceses and more than 40 countries, with enrollment of more than 5,000 students each year.

Zukowski has had a long and distinguished service to the Catholic church and the University of Dayton. For seven years, she served as the world president for the International Catholic Association for Radio and Television, known as UNDA. As a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications — the first woman with voting privileges on that Vatican council — she was a major pastoral contributor to the important Vatican document, *Aetatis Novae*. The document called for development of pastoral communications planning around the world.

She co-wrote the book *The Gospel in Cyberspace*, and she co-directs the Caribbean School for Catholic Communication.

In 1997, UNDA-USA awarded her the President's Medallion — a lifetime achievement award — and the NCEA and Peter Li Group named her one of the 25 most influential individuals in Catholic education over the past 25 years.

In 2001, Pope John Paul II awarded her the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal, bestowed to lay people and clergy who have given zealous and outstanding service to the Catholic church. In 2004, she received the Distinguished Communicators Award from the Salesian Guild. And in 2010, the National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors awarded her the Emmaus Award for Excellence in Catechesis.

Past recipients of the NCCL Catechetical Award include the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Catechesis; Edmund F. Gordon, past NCCL president and executive producer of the video-based catechist formation program called "Echoes of Faith;" and Jane Regan, theology and religious education professor at Boston College.

The NCCL has been a leader in Catholic religious education in the United States since 1967. It is dedicated to bringing the teaching ministry of Jesus to every Catholic child, youth and adult. More than 90 percent of U.S. dioceses/eparchies are members of NCCL.

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