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A Lens of Faith

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An Emmy award-winning filmmaker known for his profiles of powerful historical figures is scheduled to speak at the University of Dayton next week when he receives a University award for communicating the Gospel.

Martin Doblmeier, founder and president of Journey Films, will give a talk titled "Through the Lens of Faith" and show portions of his films at 5 p.m. Thursday, March 8, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom, as part of the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation annual conference. The University of Dayton's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives will present the Daniel J. Kane Religious Communications Award to Doblmeier for outstanding lifetime dedication to Gospel values using mass media.

Doblmeier's talk will be recorded and posted online Friday, March 9, at vcc.udayton.edu.

The award is named for Daniel J. Kane, the former communication director for the archdiocese of Cincinnati. In the 19-year history of the award, recipients have included film producers, the Archbishop of Cincinnati and the press coordinator for the Vatican.

"I actually don't think of myself first as a documentary filmmaker," Doblmeier said. "I think of myself as someone who wants to explore how God is present in our world today and how people act out of their own search for the divine in their lives. To me, that is endlessly fascinating.

"Documentary filmmaking is a very visual medium, and it can do a wonderful job of telling stories about things on the surface. Spirituality is something deeper, often hidden deep within. But if we do it well — if we are able to convey those things that are most personal and spiritual — it can be a very moving experience for a viewer."

Doblmeier's productions include: Bonhoeffer, about the German theologian and Nazi resister Dietrich Bonhoeffer; The Power of Forgiveness; The Adventists, about the history and contemporary story of Seventh-Day Adventists now airing on PBS stations; and Albert Schweitzer: Called to Africa.

In addition to winning an Emmy for his documentary Washington National Cathedral, Doblmeier is a six-time winner of the prestigious Gabriel Award for best film on a topic of religion and a two-time winner of the top award from the Religious Communicators Council.

Journey Films is a film and television production company that focuses on religion, faith and spirituality and their role in today's world. Since beginning Journey in 1984, Doblmeier has produced more than two dozen award-winning films that have taken him to more than 45 countries, profiling Nobel laureates, leading religious figures and heads of state.

"He is an articulate and prophetic storyteller and filmmaker for the 21st century who captures the religious perspective and sensitivities of his audiences," said Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., director of the University's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives. "We need this religious dimension in our stories, and we need people like Doblmeier to remind us of those who made their mark in history, who became our heroes, and to remind us that we too are called to holiness and greatness."

The University's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation is an online program open to anyone that offers 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 50 diocese partners in the U.S. It reaches into 182 Catholic dioceses and more than 40 countries, Zukowski said.

The VLCFF offers 65 online courses in more than 400 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 expects nearly 4,000 people to take courses in 2012.
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