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Exclusion from the Church

05.13.2011 | Catholic, Campus and Community Three discussions of often-debated topics in Christian faith traditions — migration, the role of women and racial justice — will be open to the public as part of an international conference at the University of Dayton May 18-22.

"The tension between inclusion and tradition is at the heart of many high-profile conflicts we see in the news media," said conference coordinator Dennis Doyle, a University of Dayton religious studies professor. "This tension is present in every Christian faith tradition and affects issues such as immigration, the ordination of women and racial justice."

Doyle said a hallmark of contemporary Christianity has been greater outreach and inclusion toward previously excluded groups. At the same time, there is also increased emphasis on honoring tradition, upholding shared faith and maintaining the rituals and practices that contribute to identity.

The free, public discussions — Ecclesiology, Exclusion and Migration (Wednesday, May 18), Exclusion and Racial Justice (Thursday, May 19) and Women, Ministry and Exclusion (Friday, May 20) — each begin at 7:30 p.m. at the University of Dayton in the 1700 South Patterson Building, formerly the NCR world headquarters.

The "Ecclesiology and Exclusion" conference, co-sponsored by the University and the Ecclesiological Investigations Research Network, will explore these issues. Ecclesiology is the theological study of the church.

Doyle said the Ecclesiological Investigations Research Network brings together theologians and scholars from around the world to help build a framework among various Christian traditions toward mutual understanding, cooperation and acceptance.

The conference will also mark the debut of *Women & Catholicism*, a new book by award-winning Catholic scholar Phyllis Zagano.

Women & Catholicism explores Catholicism's weak spot according to Zagano: the role of women in the Catholic Church. It investigates the tension between communion and authority, especially where women are concerned, and sheds light on the hierarchically imposed laws and sanctions that keep women at a distance from the holy, whether as liturgical ministers, as wives of priests, or as priests themselves. Zagano is senior research associate-in-residence and adjunct professor of religion at Hofstra University, and a columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Other eminent scholars from Europe, Africa and the United States speaking at the conference include: Gioacchino Campese, Urbaniana University, Rome; the Rev. Bryan Massingale, Marquette University; the Rev. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, Hekima College, Jesuit School of Theology, Kenya; and Gerard Mannion, University of San Diego.

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