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Excellence in Religious Education

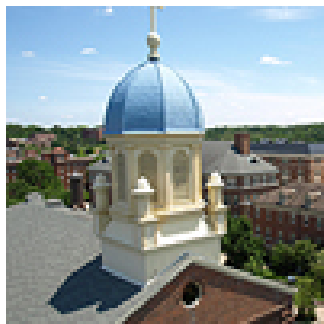
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Excellence in Religious Education

04.06.2010 | Faculty, Catholic

The National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors (NPCD) selected Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., — a religious studies professor and director of the University's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives — to receive the 2010 Emmaus Award for Excellence in Catechesis.

The Emmaus Award is given each year to an individual who has exercised outstanding national leadership in the field of catechesis — religious instruction — and who has consistently contributed significantly to the mission of spreading the Gospel, through writing, publishing, teaching or research. The NPCD is a division of the National Catholic Educational Association.

Zukowski accepted the award April 6 at the association's national convention in Minneapolis.

The NPCD committee said Zukowski has "advocated for adult faith formation and catechetical leadership with integrity and vitality." They specifically noted her work with the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation and the Forum for Young Catechetical Leaders, both growing programs that promote catechesis.

The Forum for Young Catechetical Leaders is a two-year program for undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Dayton. The goal is to prepare students to become outstanding catechists in a variety of ministry environments and to make use of modern technology to communicate faith.

"The church needs women and men who have a heart to cultivate their imaginations to make a difference for tomorrow," Zukowski said. "We need to allow ourselves to play with our ideas and explore new portals for meeting the emerging needs of the church."

The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation celebrated its 10th anniversary in February. The online program has 50 diocesan partners, has e-learners in 125 dioceses and goes into 34 foreign countries. The VLCFF extends adult religious education and faith formation training to anyone with access to the Internet

The VLCFF currently offers 60 courses in 11 different categories including catechesis, scripture, social justice, church history and communication. It also offers four certificate programs. Enrollment per cycle has topped 500. The courses are designed to be affordable — just \$30-\$40 for those in partner dioceses — and are open to anyone.

Zukowski said her team is currently focusing on creating a Virtual Conference Center to complement traditional conferences, to allow access to learning and discussion without having to be physically present.

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. And in 2004, she received the Distinguished Communicators Award from the Salesian Guild.

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