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



A New Leader in Marian Studies

01.15.2010 | Catholic, Faculty A Marianist priest with a global perspective will be installed Jan. 25 as the new executive director of the Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, a world-renowned center of scholarship and learning about Mary, the mother of Christ.

The Rev. François Rossier, S.M., will be installed in a formal ceremony and prayer service in the Immaculate Conception Chapel attended by University and church officials, including the new Archbishop of Cincinnati Dennis Schnurr, and the Rev. Jim Fitz, assistant provincial of the Society

of Mary.

As part of the installation, Rossier will give a talk about the study of Mary at the University titled "Why Study Mary?"

"There is a renewal of interest in Mary around the world," Rossier said. "She's the most written-about woman in the entire human history, and she's an emblem of Catholic tradition and identity.

"Through the Marian Library and Institute, we can help make her accessible to people around the world. There is a great desire to be better acquainted with her by many people of faith," Rossier said.

The Rev. Paul Marshall, S.M., rector of the University, said the institute is a unique resource for the study of Mary in Christianity and Mary as a disciple of Christ, which is the foundation of the Marianist order. As rector, Marshall leads the University's Marianist mission.

"We look at how Mary was involved in Jesus' early life and how she was open to God's spirit," Marshall said. "The institute explores how Mary appears in scripture, how she appears in the history of the church and how she appears in people's lives.

"It's a really rich resource for people who want to have an intellectual as well as a spiritual understanding of Mary."

Rossier, born in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1957, took his first vows in 1984 and was ordained in 1991; he came to Dayton in 2003.

At home around the world, he speaks five languages and has taught on every inhabited continent. With extended time in Togo and Ivory Coast, Rossier developed a love for the African people and their cultures.

Rossier retains that special affection and is sometimes called to help out at St. Benedict the Moor parish, which ministers to many of Dayton's African-American Catholics.

Rossier's focus is on teaching and researching Biblical texts that speak of Mary. With a master's degree in literature, he also examines how Mary is portrayed in popular culture and contemporary literature such as detective novels.

Part of his vision for the institute is to work more closely with the University's department of religious studies on classes and degrees, such as a minor in Marian studies. He's teaching an undergraduate course this semester on the theology of Mary.

Rossier succeeds the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., another Swiss Marianist, who headed the institute for more than 20 years, leading its expansive growth and taking it into the digital age. Roten, an internationally recognized expert on Mary, also will be honored at the ceremony.

Under Roten's leadership, a significant number of graduate students in theology now come from around the world to study at the institute, which grants pontifical degrees through its affiliation with Pontifical University Marianum in Rome.

The library is the world's largest and most comprehensive repository of printed materials on Mary, with 75,000 books and up to 150,000 articles and pamphlets. The art collection includes an estimated 3,600 Nativity scenes, one of the largest collections in

the U.S.

The Mary Page ([url: http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/](http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/)) , established online in 1996, was one of the first religious studies programs to venture onto the Web. Today, it attracts around 360,000 visitors a year from all over the world and offers information on Mary in English, French, Spanish, Korean and Chinese.

For more information, contact Cilla Shindell, director of media relations, at 937-229-3257 or shindell@udayton.edu ([url: mailto:shindell@udayton.edu](mailto:shindell@udayton.edu)) .