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"CHRISTOPHER CLOSEUP" HOST TO RECEIVE NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

DAYTON, Ohio -- The Rev. John Catoir doesn't use his weekly television show, "Christopher Closeup," as an electronic pulpit. He doesn't talk "religion with a capital R." Instead, the Catholic priest interviews personalities--from Fred Rogers to Arlo Guthrie. Even Jewish celebrities, such as Milton Berle and Shari Lewis, have appeared on the show.

"Television is an entertainment medium, and the more intellectual you get on television, the less successful you're likely to be," said Catoir, winner of the University of Dayton's eighth annual Daniel J. Kane Religious Communications Award. "But it is possible to inspire people by presenting stories of those who are really making a difference.

"Why did Mike Farrell of 'Mash' appear on the show? He travels around the world to call attention to the plight of refugees. Here is a person using his fame and talent to help others. The message," he said, "is 'You can do something significant, too.'"

Named after the former director of communications for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the national award honors people who have made significant contributions to religious communications in the U.S. Catoir will receive the award on June 17 during the University of Dayton's Pastoral Communications Institute.

Since 1978, Catoir has been director of The Christophers, a worldwide ecumenical organization that uses the mass media to encourage people to take personal initiative to make the world a better place. The weekly half-hour series "Christopher Closeup" is syndicated to more than 60 commercial markets and 400 cable systems in the U.S. In addition, Armed Forces Television carries the show to more than 23 countries. Catoir's one-minute radio spots can be heard daily on more than 800 radio shows, and he is well known for his...
magazine articles and syndicated "Light One Candle" newspaper columns appearing in more than 200 publications around the world. He has written 10 books, including the bestseller, *Enjoy the Lord: A Guide to Contemplation*. He has served as president of three national organizations: the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, the Association of Catholic Television and Radio Syndicators and the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada.

"With the Dan Kane Award, the University of Dayton attempts to celebrate the lifetime achievements of communicators in both the electronic media and the press. Father John Catoir is a combination of both. He’s nationally and internationally respected for his contributions, and he crosses many generations," said Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., executive director of UD’s Center for Religious Communications.

The Christophers rely heavily on free public service time to broadcast their message: one person can make a difference. The group’s $3 million annual budget is underwritten by donations from individuals all over the world.

"With the onset of deregulation and rise of fundamentalists who began buying time on television, we’ve been squeezed into less accessible time slots, but we’ve maintained a good track record of 40 consecutive years on the air, and our station count is rising," Catoir said in a phone interview from his New York office.

"With the help of God it’s our aim to encourage as many people as possible to help make this a better world."

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For media interviews, contact the Rev. John Catoir at (212) 759-4050.