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The University of Dayton

News Release

March 10, 1993

Contact: Rosemary Harty

RELIGIOUS CULTS: A FATAL ATTRACTION? -- Cult leader David Koresh told his Branch Davidians that he is a messiah. Jim Jones led his followers to death. What is the continuing attraction of cults that lead members to dangerous action? The Rev. William P. Frost, a University of Dayton professor of religious studies who has examined cults, says there's psychological, physiological and sociological reasons why individuals become trapped in a cult. "Psychologically, people need security. A cult leader promises security of the ultimate kind, validated by God. The clincher is always this: one has to give oneself *totally* to the cult," Frost says. Cults also appeal to people who are "left out" of mainstream society, Frost said.

Finally, Frost says "brainwashing" is more than emotional control; it's physiological. "The cult people cut themselves away from their feelings and their common sense, are totally brainwashed by means of conceptualized theories, and as such, lose touch with self and become total victims of the brainwashed reality," he said. Only when the brainwashing is undone, "to clean the slate and restore the connection of self-esteem," can a member escape the lure of the cult, he said.

Contact the Rev. William P. Frost at (513) 229-4320.

BAGELS FOR BREAKFAST -- Homeless people who spend the night at St. Vincent De Paul Hotel can have bagels for breakfast thanks to a variety of service groups, fraternities, sororities and other volunteers who collect the bagels each night. The endeavor began with the Britt family: John, professor of teacher education, his wife, Jane, and their son, John, who teaches in UD's visual arts department. Mrs. Britt says her son learned bagels were being discarded at the Bagel Cafe in Kettering, and the family made arrangements to begin collecting them for St. Vincent's. When the job got too big, the Britts called for help and UD students responded. Service groups including Bread for the World, the St. Vincent DePaul Society and Circle K, along with Greek groups, now provide volunteers for the nightly bagel pickup. "People who say young folks aren't dedicated and responsible haven't met these students," Mrs. Britt says.

Contact Nick Cardilino at Campus Ministry at (513) 229-2524.

SUPREME COURT MAY LEAN LEFT -- Justice Byron White, a conservative voice on the U.S. Supreme Court, may retire in the next few months. That will give President Clinton his first appointee, but don't look for a radical liberal, says University of Dayton political science professor Gerald Kerns, who is writing a book on the court. Kerns has studied Clinton's Arkansas court appointments and found Clinton seeks moderate-to-liberal candidates. Clinton also has about 100 vacancies to fill at district and circuit court levels. "But unlike Reagan and Bush, for whom ideology was a main factor -- they tended to look for conservatives -- Clinton will seek more diversity: women, blacks and other minorities, Kerns said. It's likely, Kerns added, that Clinton will make two additional appointments.

Contact Gerald Kerns at (513) 229-3650.

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