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**NEW TEACHERS ENTER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS THIS FALL
WITH HOPES OF SHARING THEIR FAITH WITH STUDENTS**

DAYTON, Ohio — To move them, to make religion part of their students' lives.

That's the goal of the teachers who have committed the first two years of their careers to the Lalanne program, a teacher placement program sponsored by the University of Dayton's Center for Catholic Education.

The program recruits education and religious studies majors from UD and other universities to teach in rural and urban Catholic schools and to work to expand their own faith and the faith of their students.

This month, Lalanne will place its first six teachers in Dayton Catholic schools including Chaminade-Julienne High School, Dayton Catholic Elementary School and Corpus Christi School.

"I really hope to be able to share myself with my students, to share my faith with my students," says Anna Gagacki, a UD 1999 elementary education graduate who will teach fourth grade at Dayton Catholic Elementary School. "I hope I can learn and grow with them."

Shortly after the Center for Catholic Education was created in 1996, UD surveyed Catholic schools throughout the region to determine what schools' needs were and how the CCE could help.

The survey found that Catholic schools were in the midst of a crisis: Not only was it increasingly difficult to find qualified teachers in the face of a nationwide teacher shortage, but it was also getting harder to find teachers who could connect lessons to students' burgeoning spirituality. The overwhelming response from administrators was that they needed help finding good teachers.

Through Lalanne, a program named for the 18th-century priest, Jean Baptiste Lalanne, who helped shape the Marianist educational tradition, UD is partnering with area dioceses to place teachers in schools.

The teachers live in community with other teachers and receive a mentor from the diocese as well as ongoing professional and spiritual development opportunities. During the summer, Lalanne teachers take master's level courses in education and religious studies at UD.

"Most schools are saying, 'We need teachers who can help students understand and develop their faith in Jesus Christ,'" says Brother Ed Brink, S.M., director of the Lalanne program and former principal of Chaminade-Julienne High School in Dayton. "That's not just the job of a religion teacher.

"There's been a real examination by Catholic schools, particularly over the last 10 years,

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to determine what makes these schools Catholic," he adds. "In the past, the religious dimension of the school was identified with the large number of sisters, brothers and priests who taught in schools. That was always taken for granted. Now we have more lay teachers, and if you're a qualified teacher, the question becomes, 'what makes you different than those teaching in public schools?'"

Gagacki says her Catholic school student-teaching experience was a fulfilling one. "It's a different situation talking about morals in a Catholic classroom. In a public school, you can teach them that they have to be nice. In a Catholic school, you can teach them that their faith is important, that their soul is important."

Living in community with other teachers also appeals to Gagacki. "I've heard horror stories about the first two years of teaching," she says. "I think it will be beneficial to me to have someone to vent to and to share with when my students do something awesome. When a student does something great at school now, I go home and tell my roommates, and they think it's great but they don't get it."

Dave Conard, a senior religious studies and history major who will complete his teaching certification at UD in December, says he has always wanted to teach — knowing that his career choice was different from many of his peers. His roommates, he says, often discuss their prospective jobs in engineering or medicine. Their beginning salaries, he notes, will be more than he ever hopes to make.

"Life for me is more simple than that. I plan on being happy, not wealthy," he says, noting that, as a Lalanne teacher, his first few years out of college will be free of some of the material worries his friends will battle. "I don't have to worry about things like buying the new car, where I'm going to live, competing with my friends. Lalanne allows me to focus on what I feel is truly important."

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For media interviews, call **Brother Ed Brink, S.M.**, at (937) 229-3709. All of the Lalanne teachers, including **Anna Gagacki**, can be reached at (937) 256-4546. **Dave Conard** can be contacted at (937) 293-8413.