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Faith Communicator

University of Dayton

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Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, director of the University of Dayton’s Institute for Pastoral Initiatives, has been honored with the 2016 Medium and Light Award for her lifetime work in utilizing media technologies for faith formation in the spirit of influential media theorist Marshall McLuhan.
The Marshall McLuhan Initiative at St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, honored Zukowski "for her long and courageous exploration of a theology of communications that probes how media technologies may be more effectively used in faith formation to understand the Gospel in a digital age."

The international award recognizes the religious dimensions of the life and work of McLuhan, a Manitoba native and University of Manitoba graduate. The name of the award was inspired by McLuhan's book *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*.

Zukowski is only the sixth person to receive the award, which is given to a person, group or organization that has made a significant contribution to religious communication inspired by observations by McLuhan, whose Catholic faith informed his thinking about humanity.

A longtime media practitioner, entrepreneur, scholar and educator in Catholic communications, Zukowski has been involved with distance education for more than 40 years. She began with cable TV in 1971 and continued to advance into radio, satellite communication, multimedia, computer technologies, the Internet and now digital technologies. She was the UNDA World President for Catholic Radio and Television, served on the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (Vatican) and received the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal* from Pope John Paul II in 2001.

A professor in the University of Dayton's religious studies department, Zukowski founded the worldwide Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation at the University. The VLCFF partners with more than 55 dioceses around the globe to offer online distance-learning to support catechist, lay leadership/ministry and adult faith formation in the Catholic Church, serving more than 7,000 students in 40 countries. More than 112 courses are offered in English and Spanish.

While Zukowski has been a pioneer in digital faith formation, in accepting the award she challenged the audience to untether from technology in order “to consciously discern the ‘Art of Being Human in a Digital Milieu’ so we do not awaken one day to discover ourselves engulfed in a ‘Matrix,’ a technological and virtual world void of the beauty and wonder of being human.

"Technologies have a tendency to tie people down and even enslave them by their mesmerizing power and effects. This is only true to the extent that people let themselves be so enslaved," Zukowski said.

In working with students, she invites them to occasionally detach and go technology-free to enlarge their experience of silence, beauty, wonder, reflection and deep meditation.

"Here is one pathway for discovering a ‘whole and holy’ life in world brimming with digital distractions," Zukowski said.

The award was presented Oct. 16 at an international conference sponsored by the McLuhan Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto.

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