



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

For Immediate Release

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
June 14, 2010

CARA Appoints Interim Executive Director

After 12 years of dedicated service with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, including seven as executive director, Sister Mary E. Bendyna, RSM, is stepping down at the end of June. CARA research associate Father Stephen J. Fichter will serve as interim executive director while a national search for a new executive director is underway. Information about the executive director position can be found on the CARA website at <http://cara.georgetown.edu/announce.html>.

Father Fichter specializes in seminary, clergy, and parish research and has been involved in CARA research projects for the National Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy and the National Federation of Priests' Councils. He holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from Rutgers University and an M.S.W. from the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University. He also earned ecclesiastical degrees in philosophy and theology from the Pontifical Athenaeum *Regina Apostolorum* in Rome and is fluent in Italian and Spanish. Father Stephen is a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark and pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Haworth, NJ. He is also grandnephew of the late Jesuit sociologist Father Joseph Fichter.

Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas, Chair of the CARA Board of Directors, welcomed Father Fichter and commended Sister Mary and the CARA staff for their work. "CARA has contributed greatly to the mission of the Church under Sister Mary Bendyna's leadership," Bishop Kicanas said. "Father Stephen Fichter, with his strong research background and pastoral experience, will further advance CARA's important work."

During her tenure at CARA, Sister Mary was involved in a wide range of research projects that examined the beliefs and practices of American Catholics and assessed various aspects of Church life in the United States. She was the principal investigator for dozens of studies on ministry, education, faith formation, priesthood, and religious life, including major studies for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Educational Association, and the National Religious Vocation Conference. Sister Mary has also been a frequent presenter at academic conferences and meetings of Catholic organizations.

Under Sister Mary's leadership, CARA hosted a landmark symposium on Hispanic/Latino(a) Catholics in the United States that brought together researchers, pastoral ministers, and Church leaders. CARA also expanded its online data collection efforts and increased its online presence through an innovative blog (<http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com>) and Twitter site (<http://twitter.com/caracatholic>).

About the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

CARA is a national, non-profit research center that conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964 and affiliated with Georgetown University since 1989, CARA has three major dimensions to its mission: to increase the Church's self understanding, to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers, and to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism. For more information about CARA, visit <http://cara.georgetown.edu>.