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Common Ground Initiative honors Sr. Carol Keehan

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Sr. Carol Keehan

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative presented its annual Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Award June 26 to Sr. Carol Keehan, a Daughter of Charity who is president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association.

Keehan was selected because of "her extraordinary contributions to creating common ground between church leaders and government officials, organized labor and Catholic health care providers, the rich and the poor," according to the citation presented to her.

The ceremony preceded the initiative's annual Msgr. Philip J. Murnion lecture, given this year by Jim Davidson, professor emeritus of sociology at Purdue University.

Mercy Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, senior vice president for mission at Catholic Healthcare Partners and a member of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative Committee, read the citation. It praised Keehan for her efforts to achieve national health care reform and for her work on a recent document by representatives of Catholic health care, the labor movement and the U.S. bishops' conference setting principles designed to ensure a fair process as health care workers decide whether to join a union.

"Sister Carol is at home in any setting: the White House, congressional hearing rooms, Vatican curial offices, national and diocesan church circles, health system board rooms, hospitals, clinics, shelters and soup kitchens," the citation reads.

"Wherever she goes, she promotes the church's health care ministry in a pluralistic society, and calls the ministry to be its best self in the face of sometimes hostile or skeptical critics," it adds.

The award is named for the late Chicago archbishop who was a co-founder of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative.

Previous winners include the National Council of Catholic Women; Archbishop Harry J. Flynn, the now-retired head of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis; Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta; and, last year, Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz.

The lecture and award ceremony were held on the campus of The Catholic University of America in Washington

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