

Sr. Anne E. Patrick receives John Courtney Murray Award at CTSA

Jamie Manson | Jun. 9, 2013 NCR Today
Miami

The Catholic Theological Society of America has chosen Dr. Anne E. Patrick as the 2013 recipient of the John Courtney Murray Award. Considered the Society's highest honor, the award is given annually to a member who has achieved a lifetime of distinguished theological scholarship.

Patrick is Laird Professor of Religion and Liberal Arts *emerita* at Carleton College in Northfield Minnesota. She is also a member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Much of her theological work has focused on feminist theology and religion and literature. She has published two influential monographs *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology* and *Women, Conscience, and the Creative Process*.

The award was presented by CTSA President Susan Ross during the annual convention's Saturday evening banquet. In the citation, Ross made special mention of Patrick's ten-year battle with breast cancer. "Through it all, her dedication to her community, students, family, and church has never wavered," Ross said.

In a brief speech, Patrick remembered Catherine LaCugna and Margaret O'Gara, two members of the society who might have received the award had they not succumbed to the disease.

Patrick also recalled her own calling to study theology in 1967 while she was a young sister and high school teacher completing her bachelor's degree "on the eleven-year plan."

After spending a thirty-day retreat reading the documents of Vatican II (which had concluded only a few years earlier), and hearing a lecture by noted theologian Monika Hellwig (then a doctoral student), Patrick said she had "a sense of the importance of theology and the possibility that women could work in this field."

Both the teachings of the Council and Hellwig's speech gave her the courage to take the steps toward theological studies at the University of Chicago, where she received both her MA and Ph.D.

Patrick concluded her acceptance with an unusual word of thanks to the "mostly white men" who "encouraged my participation and leadership in the days when white women were under-represented in the Society."

"I hope that we who have moved from the periphery to the center will take our cue from such men," Patrick said in conclusion, "and be proactive about encouraging those from other under-represented groups to find their theological voices and share their wisdom."