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Catholic Common Ground Initiative honors humanitarian efforts and explores Catholic involvement in national debate on racial justice

CHICAGO – On June 26, 2015, Carolyn Woo, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), will receive the Bernardin Award for contributing to the achievement of common ground in the Church, and the Rev. Bryan Massingale, professor of theological ethics at Marquette University, will present the 2015 Murnion Lecture. His lecture will focus on the timely topic “Is Common Ground Possible in the Pursuit of Racial Justice?” The Murnion Lecture is an annual event of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative (CCGI), a program of the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago.

In 2013, Carolyn Woo was featured in *Foreign Policy* as one of the 500 most powerful people on the planet as a “force for good.” Additionally, Woo’s Catholic News Service monthly column took first place in the 2013 Catholic Press Association Awards in the category of Best Regular Column – Spiritual Life. Prior to her work at CRS, Dr. Woo served from 1997 to 2011 as dean of the University of Notre Dame’s Mendoza College of Business.

Fr. Bryan Massingale specializes in social ethics with a focus on the impact of religious faith as both an instrument of social injustice and a catalyst for social transformation. He is the author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Orbis 2010), which received a First Place Book Award from the Catholic Press Association. His current research projects explore the contribution of Black religious radicalism to Catholic theology; the notion of “cultural sin” and its challenge to Catholic theological ethics; and the intersections of race and sexuality in both social life and Catholicism.

Fr. Massingale’s lecture will address the current state of Catholic involvement in the national debate on racial justice. In light of the recent killings of unarmed African Americans, the United States’ unfinished quest for racial equality has risen to the forefront of public debate. Because these discussions are often racially polarized, Catholic engagement with the larger conversation presents a muddled and muted witness. The 2015 Murnion lecture will examine the challenges of and possibilities for robust Catholic witness in overcoming our nation’s most enduring social divide.

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative was founded in 1996 in an effort to lessen polarities and divisions that weaken the communion of the Church. Like the Bernardin Center, CCGI is committed to the principles exemplified and espoused in the life and works of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the late Archbishop of Chicago. In particular, CCGI strives to facilitate dialogue while demonstrating a process of communication that values varying perspectives and works to foster faith and understanding.

The Murnion Lecture will take place June 26 at 7 pm in Catholic Theological Union’s Academic and Conference Center, 5416 South Cornell Avenue, Chicago. To register, visit www.catholiccommonground.org. Free and open to the public.

About Catholic Theological Union: *CTU is a Roman Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry. Its mission is to prepare effective leaders for the Church, ready to witness to Christ’s good news of justice, love, and peace. CTU’s 4,000 lay and vowed religious graduates are serving in 60 countries worldwide.*

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