News



Sr. Dorothy Stang, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, is pictured in a 2004 file photo in Belem, northern Brazil. The nun was 73 when she was murdered Feb. 12, 2005, on an isolated road near the Brazilian town of Anapu. (CNS/Reuters)



by James Dearie

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Editor's Note: Welcome to NCR's college roundup, where every Friday we bring you the latest news in Catholic college and university life. Do you have news you would like to share? Email James Dearie at jdearie@ncronline.org.

BELMONT, Calif. — Notre Dame de Namur University will cohost a commemoration of the life of Notre Dame de Namur Sr. Dorothy Stang Feb. 15 at the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Province Center, which is also cohosting the event, the university announced in a Feb. 2 press release.

Stang, a graduate of the university, was born in Dayton, Ohio, but is remembered for her work establishing schools, teaching agriculture, and defending the rights of the poor in the Amazon basin of Brazil. After 40 years in Brazil, Stang was ultimately murdered in 2005, gunned down while reading the beatitudes out loud to her assassins.

"This is a crucial time to remember the life and example of Sister Dorothy," Diana Enriquez-Field, director of the Sister Dorothy Stang Center for Social Justice and Community Engagement and the NDNU Office of Spirituality said in the press release. "The goals she worked toward and gave her life for are, if anything, more crucial in the current political and environmental situation."

The memorial is open to the public.

WORCESTER, Mass. — College of the Holy Cross has decided to stick with its mascot and team name "Crusaders" after a recent board meeting, the Associated Press reported Feb. 3.

The college had said it would review the mascot last year in light of its potential to be seen as Islamophobic. Recently, many Catholic schools at all levels have reconsidered or done away with the "Crusader" moniker.

"While we acknowledge that the Crusades were among the darkest periods in Church history, we choose to associate ourselves with the modern definition of the word crusader," university president Jesuit Fr. Philip Boroughs and board chair John J. Mahoney said in an email to the college community. "We are not simply crusaders, we are Holy Cross Crusaders," they added.

The college's student newspaper, known as "The Crusader" for nearly a century, however, has announced that it is changing its name. The Feb. 9 issue and subsequent issues will be published as "The Spire," in honor of the twin spires that adorn Fenwick Hall, a prominent building on campus.

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Anjan Chakravartty, currently a professor of philosophy and director of the John J. Reilly Center for Science, Technology, and Values at the University of Notre Dame, will assume a new endowed chair for the study of atheism, The Atlantic reported in a Jan. 31 article on teaching atheism.

The Appignani Foundation Chair for the Study of Atheism, Humanism, and Secular Ethics was endowed by atheist businessman Louis Appignani at the University of Miami in 2016. "I'm trying to eliminate discrimination against atheists," Appignani told The New York Times when he endowed the chair, "so this is a step in that direction, to make atheism legitimate."

According to the report in The Atlantic, Appignani's gift "marks the first time in American history that a faculty position has been endowed specifically for the study of atheism."

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SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The University of Notre Dame has reversed its policy toward birth control again.

Since the Trump administration did away with the requirement that employers include access to birth control in health care plans, the university has struggled to articulate a consistent position on its birth control coverage, first announcing in November that they would no longer be covering it, only to then announce that birth control would continue to be covered under a third party provider a few days later.

Now, according to a Feb. 7 report in The Atlantic, a letter from the president of Notre Dame, Holy Cross Fr. John Jenkins, states that "Notre Dame has decided to ban 'abortion-inducing drugs' from third-party-provided insurance plans. It will also begin providing coverage for 'simple contraceptives' in the university plan."

Which drugs are considered "abortion inducing" is not clear, but the university said that it would clarify the point in March.

ST. PAUL, Minn. — The University of St. Thomas will host Bob Klanderud for a talk entitled "Encountering the Dakota Worldview" Feb. 22, the university announced in a press release Feb 7.

Klanderud is of Dakota and Lakota heritage, and a "leader in Healing Minnesota Stories, a project that works towards understanding and healing between Native American and non-Native people," the press release says.

In announcing the event, which is six in an eight-part series about religious literacy and encountering others' traditions, the university quoted the great religious scholar William Cantwell Smith, who said that to "understand Buddhists, we must not look at something called Buddhism but at the world so far as possible through Buddhist eyes."

"Likewise," reads the press release, "in order to understand Judaism, Hinduism, and so on, we must not look at Judaism, Hinduism and so on, but at the worldviews of Jews, Hindus, and so on."

ATCHISON, Kan. — A new program at Benedictine College hopes to spark enthusiasm for STEM fields, according to a Feb. 2 press release by the college.

The Dr. Wangari Maathai STEM Fellows program will provide opportunities for "biology, chemistry/biochemistry, engineering, math/computer science, physics/astronomy and psychology" majors, the press release said.

Maathai, the programs namesake, graduated from Benedictine College in 1964 with a degree in biology. She went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, the only alumna of an American Catholic college to receive the prestigious award.

[James Dearie is an NCR Bertelsen intern. Contact him at jdearie@ncronline.org.]

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